

From Tennis Courts to Public Squares

From Tennis Courts to Public Squares: A Life of Faith, Service, and Standing for Freedom



A Memoir by Robert “Bob” Kraft

Pastor, Soldier, Coach

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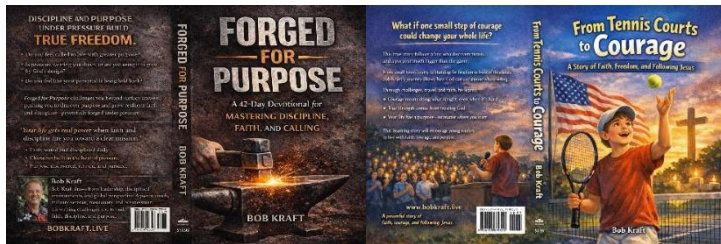
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Dedication

To my children, whose lives carry forward everything that matters most. This is written for you and to pass on to future generations. To those who will benefit from reading it, I am thankful. To those who stood for freedom, whether known or unknown. To those many friends from around the world who stood with me and remain in my heart and memory who are not named here. Too many friends, too numerous to mention them all and who contributed to who I am today. I am incredibly grateful. And to God, whose guidance made every step possible.

Preface

I did not set out to live an extraordinary life. One decision led to another, opening doors I never expected—Berlin, the military, communist China, Hong Kong.

I see now God's hand in every step. Nothing was wasted. Each phase prepared me for the next.

Tennis taught discipline. The military showed me the cost of freedom. Faith in Jesus Christ gave everything meaning—strength in hardship, peace in uncertainty, and purpose beyond circumstance.

In communist China and Hong Kong, God expanded my vision through the resilience of ordinary people. This life was not planned—it was lived step by step, guided by Jesus Christ.

If there is one truth, it is this: purpose is found in serving Jesus Christ—moving forward in faith, even when it would be easier to remain silent.

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Timeline of a Life Guided by Faith and Service

~1957 — Born in Normal, Illinois

1969 (age 12) — Discovered tennis; trained intensely; won first tournament

Late '60s-'70s — Junior/high school competition; discipline formed

Mid-'70s (~17) — Nick Bollettieri camp; became youngest coach

Late '70s — U.S. Army (Germany, intelligence, administration); swept Army Europe tennis titles; Cold War exposure

Late '70s to early '80s — USMAPS, DLI (Russian), Univ. of Maryland (German), Illinois State, Concordia (Business). University tennis

1980s — Founded tennis schools; coached with life focus

1985 — Committed life to Jesus Christ

1986 — Sold business; moved to Hawaii for ministry; Asia missions

1988 — Founded Tennis Ministry International

Early '90s — Ministry work in communist China

1992-1997 — Hong Kong: family life, pastoral ordination, expanding ministry. Global ministry to pro tennis players

1997 — Hong Kong handover observed

2004 — Narrow escape from Indian Ocean tsunami

2012 — Transition from tennis ministry

2013 — 106-hour hunger strike (Hong Kong justice advocacy)

2014 — Umbrella Movement pastoral role

2019 — Wrongful detention in Hong Kong; rising tensions

2022 — Relocated to Kapolei, Hawaii and continued outreach (youth, homeless, veterans)

Present — Ongoing pastoral care; supporting Hong Kong victims; legacy of faith and service

Chapter 1: The Flag They Couldn't Ignore

“For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.” — Galatians 5:1

Theme: The enduring human struggle for freedom in the face of rising tyranny.

The first time I raised the American flag in Hong Kong, I knew exactly what it meant. I wasn't observing. I wasn't blending in. I was stepping into view. And in a city where visibility was becoming dangerous, that decision carried weight.

By 2014, communist Hong Kong had changed. Not suddenly. But steadily. Freedoms that once defined the city—speech, press, religion—were not removed. They were narrowed. Quietly and deliberately. You felt it before you could name it. Conversations softened. Journalists hesitated. Pastors measured their words. Nothing looked different. But everything had changed.



Bob Kraft, Hong Kong his first flag raising. 2014

Then the protests came—as clarity. Millions stepped into the streets. Students. Families. Workers. The elderly. Freedom fighters. People who had built their lives in a free city—and recognized that it was slipping away. They were holding a line.

That was when I stepped forward with the flag. Not because it was safe. Because it wasn't. The American flag carried meaning in communist Hong Kong. To many, it represented something larger than a nation—liberty, justice, freedom.

When I raised it above the crowd, I stood alone.

Would anyone stand with me?

No one moved. Then—slowly—something shifted. One flag appeared. Then another. Then more. What began with one became dozens. Then hundreds. It spread faster than I could carry it. At that point, it was no longer mine. It belonged to them.

I carried it everywhere. Through crowded streets. Narrow walkways. Shopping districts. Public squares. Past communist police lines. Past communist government buildings. Outside communist courtrooms where justice had bent.



Hong Kong with flags

I never concealed it. I never lowered it. Sometimes I stood still, holding it above the crowd. Other times I moved—lifting it high enough to be seen over a sea of umbrellas. I didn’t need to speak. The message was already clear: Freedom is worth defending.

Visibility has a cost.

Three times, I was attacked for carrying that flag. Kicked. Struck. Drenched with whatever people had in their hands. Not because of who I was. Because of what it represented. I was arrested once. Detained another time. Twice, the flag was taken from me—once pulled directly from my hands. During arrest, I was told I was “under arrest and not detained.” The contradiction wasn’t confusion. It was control.

They brought me into a holding cell designed to strip away dignity. The kind of place meant to reduce you—to make you smaller than your belief. The flag was taken. For a time, so seemed certainty. I

didn't know if I would be held for hours—or longer. But one thing did not change: I had broken no law. The accusation was false—that I carried an invalid Hong Kong identification card. I requested contact with the U.S. Consulate. Denied. Then—without explanation—it ended. I was released the same day. No charges. An apology at the door. The flag was returned. But the message was clear: You can stand. But you will pay for it.

So I went back out. Because by then, this was no longer about me. It was about America and what it represents.

One day remains fixed in my memory.

The largest march in communist Hong Kong's history. Millions filled the streets—stretching farther than the eye could follow. I stood on an overpass above the main route. Below me, a river of people moved forward—slow, steady, unified. Families walked together. Young people stood with quiet resolve. The elderly refused to stay home. There was no chaos. Only purpose. They were all moving in the same direction: Toward the United States Consulate. They believed someone might be listening.

As they passed beneath me, I raised the flag high above the overpass. Faces turned upward. Some nodded. Others simply looked. No words were exchanged. None were needed. They weren't just marching. They were asking to be seen.

Then something happened I did not expect. A small group moved toward me. They positioned themselves close—deliberate, watchful. They told me they would stay. To protect me. To protect the flag. They had no reason to do that. They were already at risk just by being there. Surveillance was increasing. Consequences were coming. Everyone understood that. Still—they stayed. Not because of me. Because of what the flag stood for.



Bob flag, protected in Hong Kong.

In that moment, I understood what I was witnessing. This wasn't protest. This was something deeper. The human instinct for freedom—undeniable. Communism can restrict it. Communism can suppress it. Communism can delay it. But communism cannot remove it. I saw that truth with my own eyes. And I have carried it with me ever since.

There comes a moment when ordinary people decide that what they believe is worth the risk. That day in communist Hong Kong, millions reached that moment. And once that line is crossed—once fear loses its hold—the outcome is no longer fully controlled. The world may ignore it for a time. But not forever.

Ordinary People, Extraordinary Courage

There are many who stood in those streets whose names will never be known. They are the real heroes. Steadfast. Unrecognized. Unafraid. Most covered their faces. Not for anonymity—but for protection. They received no recognition. Some received worse. Many were beaten. Some were shot. Some did not survive. They were misunderstood. At times condemned by those who marched alongside. Still—they fought. With righteous anger. The belief that freedom is worth the cost.



Hong Kong

If it were within my power, I would honor each one. But their legacy does not depend on recognition. It is already secured. Freedom is preserved—by those willing to stand and fight when standing alone carries a cost.

Chapter 2: The Tennis Courts Where It Began

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born, I set you apart.” — Jeremiah 1:5

Theme: God’s plan began before I understood it.

I was born in Normal, Illinois, USA. A place where life followed a slow steady rhythm. People worked. Families stayed. Expectations were clear. It was stable. Predictable. Not the kind of place that suggests a life shaped by risk, travel, or public conviction. Nothing in my early years pointed in that direction.

My childhood was structured. Discipline was expected. Responsibility was understood. Excuses didn’t carry weight. There was no defining moment. No sudden turning point. Life was built the way most lives are built—quietly, through repetition. Still, even then, something in me looked beyond what was in front of me. I couldn’t explain it. But I felt it.

Faith was not central in our home.

Faith existed in the background—part of the culture, not the foundation. My world was simple: School. Friends. Activity. Nothing more.



**Kraft family, Linda, Dad, Mom, Robbie (Bob), Karen.
1957**

This is where the story turns.

That changed the summer I turned twelve.

I was walking through the city park when I came across a set of public tennis courts. They weren't impressive. Cracked surface. Faded lines. Nothing remarkable. But something was happening there. Kids of my age were playing—with focus. With intention. The sound caught my attention first. The sound of the ball against the racket. I stopped. Watched.

After a while, the coach noticed me. “Want to try?” he asked. I had never held a racket before. I hesitated more from shyness than fear. Then I said yes. There was no natural talent on display. Just awkward timing, movement, and contact. But something happened in those first few minutes. Not success. Direction.

It required focus. On the ball—and on movement, timing, and adjustment. You couldn't drift. You couldn't guess. You had to engage. Completely. By the end of that first day, something had shifted. I didn't fully understand it. But I knew this: I had found something. Or it had found me.

There was no going back.

From that point forward, tennis became structure. I practiced constantly. Six hours a day when I could. Sometimes more. Repetition. Adjustment. Repetition again. There were no shortcuts. Progress came slowly. But it came.

One afternoon, I entered my class tournament. I didn't fully understand the level of competition. I only knew I wanted to compete. I won. It wasn't just a result. It was affirmation that I was recognized. From that moment, my focus changed. I stopped looking around. I started looking forward.

Tennis became my teacher. It taught discipline. It taught self-control. It taught consistency—showing up, again and again, regardless of how I felt. It also gave me something else. Identity.

As my ability improved, opportunities followed. Junior tournaments. School competition. Higher levels of play. The pattern became clear: Effort produced results. That connection shaped everything. Discipline was no longer an idea. It was a daily system. Apply it—and progress followed. Ignore it—and you fell behind. I see now something I couldn't see then. Those courts were not random.

At twelve years old, I had no vision for what was ahead. No understanding of where this would lead. Not the military, international travel, communist China, or Hong Kong. But the direction had already begun. What felt like personal interest was something deeper.

Tennis built the foundation.

Discipline. Focus. Endurance. The ability to stay with something long enough to improve. The willingness to repeat effort without immediate reward. At the time, it seemed like just a game. It wasn't. It was shaping what came next. Long before I understood faith, direction was already being set. Not through dramatic moments. Through daily repetition. Through small decisions. Through a worn older racket on a cracked court. The kind of beginning that looks ordinary—until you realize it wasn't.

Chapter 3: Ancestral Legacy — Nothing is An Accident

“One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts.” — Psalm 145:4

Theme: Faith and strength passed through generations by God’s hand.

No one begins from nothing. Before we make choices, before we form direction, something is already in motion. We inherit more than a name. We inherit patterns. Convictions. Endurance. Sometimes—without realizing it—we inherit unfinished stories.

I didn’t understand that when I was young. But over time, it became clear: My life did not begin with me.

Three distinct threads shaped what I would later become. Perseverance. Discipline. Faith. Each came through a different line of my family. Each carried its own history. Each would surface when it was needed most.

Perseverance

On my mother’s side, the story began with survival. My ancestors lived through the long Scottish and Irish struggle for freedom and independence from England—a time marked by loss, uncertainty, and impossible choices: stay and risk everything, or leave and lose everything behind.

When England maintained control, the family choose to leave. In 1702, they crossed the Atlantic not for comfort, but for the hope of freedom and the dignity to build a new life.

That first generation planted roots in America, and when the call for liberty came, they answered. They served in the American

Revolutionary War—from privates to colonels—not as subjects, but as Americans.

That decision carried forward through the generations. It became more than history; it became identity.

My mother made sure we understood that. Not through lectures, but through repetition. “We didn’t complain,” she would say. “We built.” It wasn’t said with pride. It was said as fact. From that line came something steady: Hardship is not the exception. It is part of the path.

Discipline

From my father’s side came something quieter—but just as defining. Precision. My Great-grandfather, Benedict arrived in America in 1881, tracing his roots to Bavaria in Germany, where craftsmanship wasn’t optional. Details mattered. Measurements were exact. There was a right way—and anything less was unfinished. I saw that in my father.

One moment stayed with me. Rodger, my father, was repairing a fence in the rain. He could have rushed. Finished quickly. Come inside. He didn’t. He aligned every board carefully. No shortcuts. No compromise. “If it’s worth doing,” he said, “it’s worth doing right.” There was no speech behind it. No emphasis. Just consistency. From that, I learned something that would follow me into everything: Excellence is not built in intensity. It is built in repetition.



Kraft family 1906

Faith

The Swedish side of my family carried something deeper. Faith.

My great-great-grandmother, Katrina Johansson arrived in America as a teenager in 1854. Alone and speaking only the Swedish language. During the journey, her mother died at sea with her father having died years earlier. By the time she arrived, everything familiar was gone. Everything—except what she believed. She held onto it. Not privately, but actively. She helped establish a church. She married (Fagerberg) and had a large family. She built community where there had been loss. She created stability where there had been none.

Faith, for her, was not abstract. It was survival. She gathered her family around the table. Meals became something more. Scripture was spoken—not as routine, but as foundation. Years later, my grandmother summarized it simply: “Faith isn’t just words. It’s what holds us together.”



Fagerberg family 1922. Katrina, the elder, in the middle.

The Convergence

At the time, I didn't see how these threads connected. They operated beneath the surface. Quiet. Unnoticed. But they were already forming something. Perseverance would steady me in pressure. Discipline would carry me through repetition. Faith would anchor me when everything else shifted. Each would appear at the right time. None of it was accidental.



Top row (L to R): 5 generations of Kraft son's. Joshua 2020, Robert (Bob) 1968 Bottom row: Rodger 1946, Earl 1911, Benedict 1872

Heritage in Motion

As I grew older, the pattern became harder to ignore. Generation after generation had faced disruption. War. Migration. Loss. Uncertainty. And yet—they moved forward. That realization changed how I saw hardship. It wasn't an interruption. It was continuity.

The question was never whether difficulty would come. The question was how it would be met. I had already been given the answer. Endure. Adapt. Move forward.

Preparation Without Awareness

At the time, I didn't recognize any of this as preparation. It just felt like background. Family history. Stories. Habits. But later—under pressure, in unfamiliar places, in moments that required more than instinct—I would draw from it. Without thinking. Without effort. It had already been built in. What I inherited was not accidental. It was equipping. For what would come later—The military. The Cold War. Communist China. Hong Kong.

By then, I would understand something I couldn't see at the beginning: Formation often happens long before purpose is revealed. None of it had been wasted. Nothing had been random. What was passed down had been placed. And it would carry me further than I could have imagined.

Chapter 4: Tennis — A Racket and a Dream

*“I can do all this through him who gives me strength.” —
Philippians 4:13*

Theme: Strength and discipline begin shaping purpose in Christ.

Tennis entered my life quietly. No announcement. No plan. Just a racket in my hand—and something I couldn’t explain pulling me back to the court. At twelve years old, I didn’t have a vision. I had a direction.

I practiced alone most days.

Hours at a time. Hitting against a backboard. Repeating the same motion until it felt natural—then repeating it again. There was no audience. No recognition. Only repetition. Progress came slowly. But it came.

One afternoon, in the middle of a rainstorm, I stayed on the court. The surface was slick. My footing unstable. Each step carried risk. Still, I kept hitting. I wasn’t chasing perfection. I was building something. That moment stayed with me—not because of the conditions, but because of the decision. Continue—or stop. I continued.



Bob Kraft, 1976

Tennis didn't allow shortcuts. Every mistake was visible. You either won or you lost. Every weakness exposed. There was no one else to absorb it. No one else to blame. Responsibility was immediate. So was growth. I became focused—then disciplined.

Interest became commitment. I structured my days around the court. Before school. After school. Weekends. Weather didn't matter. Fatigue didn't matter. I showed up. That pattern created something deeper than skill. It created consistency.

Competition came early.

And it came hard. Opponents were stronger. Faster. More experienced. At first, it was challenging. Then it became instructive. Every loss revealed something. Timing. Positioning. Control. Weakness wasn't hidden—it was clear. So I adjusted.

In one match, I was overpowered from the start. The first set slipped away quickly. Everything I tried came back faster, harder. I could have forced it. Tried to overpower him. Instead, I changed. Consistency over power. Placement over force. The match shifted. I still lost. But something more important happened. I learned to adapt under pressure. That lesson stayed.

Over time, I began to understand something most players overlook. The game wasn't decided by strength alone. It was decided by control. Control of thought. Control of emotion. Control of response.

Matches often turned before the final point was played. Confidence—steady or unstable—shaped outcomes. So I trained that too. I learned to reset quickly. To let go of mistakes. To focus only on what was in front of me. Not the last point. This point.

That mindset extended beyond the court.

The setting changed. The principle didn't. Tennis gave me more than structure. It gave me identity. For the first time, I knew what it meant to commit. To stay with effort long enough for it to produce something meaningful. At the time, I thought I was building a skill. I wasn't. I was being shaped.

Tennis was building discipline. Endurance. Focus. The ability to remain steady when progress was slow. It was shaping what came next. I didn't know where it would lead. But direction had already taken hold.

Years later, I would understand what I was living without realizing it:

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."
Philippians 4:13

At the time, I thought the strength was mine. It wasn't. It was being built. Given—one day at a time. One repetition at a time. One win at a time. One loss at a time. And it would become the foundation for everything that followed.

Chapter 5: Forged Under Pressure - Nick Bollettieri Tennis Camp

“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way to get the prize.” — 1 Corinthians 9:24

Theme: Christ shaping discipline and purpose through intense training.

By my late teens, tennis was no longer something I did. It was who I was. Training wasn't occasional. It was constant. Repetition. Refinement. Competition. I had built a foundation—but I knew it wasn't enough. If I wanted to advance, I needed something more. Something that would push beyond what I could create on my own.

That opportunity came at Nick Bollettieri's Tennis Camp (NBTC) in Easthampton, Massachusetts. Nick was recognized as the best tennis coach of his generation. It wasn't just a training ground. It was a proving ground. I arrived as a player. I left as something else. Early on, I was given a role I hadn't expected. Coach. The youngest on staff. It wasn't handed to me casually but by recommendation. It was observed. Tested. Earned. They saw discipline. Consistency. Awareness under pressure. And they trusted it. That trust changed everything.



NBTC, Easthampton, MA. 1975

Excuses weren't tolerated. Effort wasn't optional. Limits were pushed—then pushed again. Nick Bollettieri demanded intensity. Not occasionally. Constantly. Camp director Steve Contardi reinforced it. That environment stripped everything down. You either adapted—or you were removed.

One moment has stayed with me.

A player collapsed during an intense session. Completely exhausted. Most would have ended the drill. I didn't. I walked over. Knelt beside him. "Get up," I said. "Pressure like this builds winners." He got up. Not because it was easy. Because something in him shifted.

That moment defined something for me. Growth doesn't happen in comfort. It happens—when continuing matters more. Coaching revealed something I hadn't fully understood as a player. Tennis wasn't just physical. It was belief.

I worked with players who had the ability—but not the confidence to sustain it. One player stood out. Strong. Capable. But inconsistent. One mistake would unravel him. We worked daily. Not just on mechanics—but on mindset. "You have the ability," I told him. "The question is whether you believe and feel it.

Gradually, things changed. His strokes stabilized. His reactions steadied. His confidence followed but that wasn't the real result. He began to trust in his ability. That was the shift.

That experience clarified something I would carry forward: Coaching isn't control. It's influence. You don't create strength singularly in someone. You uncover it with other attributes. At the camp, one principle stood above everything else: Focus on the present moment. Not the last mistake. This point. Win this point. Control what you can. Release what you can't. That mindset became more than a coaching tool. It became a framework.

Years later, in environments far removed from tennis—military, ministry, public pressure—I would return to the same principle. Stay present. Stay steady. One decision at a time. The camp demanded more than skill. It demanded growth, discipline, and leadership.

I learned how to guide others when conditions were difficult.

How to lead without needing control. How to remain steady when expectations were high. It felt like preparation for tennis. It wasn't. It was preparation for everything that followed. Military service. Life inside communist systems. Moments where pressure would not be simulated—it would be real. Bollettieri's camp marked a turning point. It moved me from performance to responsibility. From competing—to leading. It reinforced what I had been learning all along: Discipline. Opportunity. Mental strength. Outcome. Leadership is proven—not declared. At the time, I was still running for visible results. Wins. Progress..

But a different race was already forming. One not measured by trophies. But by purpose. By endurance. By faithfulness.

“Run in such a way as to get the prize.” — 1 Corinthians 9:24

The training had already begun. I just didn't yet understand what I was being prepared for.

Chapter 6: The Power of Mentorship

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord.” — Colossians 3:23

Theme: Giving full effort in every moment for Christ.

Tennis had already taught me discipline. The Army would test it. My path led to the United States Military Academy Preparatory School (USMAPS). A place designed to do more than train. It was built to expose weaknesses—and remove them. I arrived as an athlete. That didn’t last.

The routine was immediate. Uncompromising. Early mornings. Physical training before sunrise. Precision drills. Constant evaluation. There was no space for excuses. Mistakes weren’t ignored. They were corrected—immediately.

One morning, I overslept. Not long. Long enough. “Kraft,” my squad leader said, “three minutes matters.” Fifty push-ups. And a week of earlier wake-ups. The message was clear. Discipline is not personal. It’s collective. Your failure doesn’t stop with you. That environment changed how I thought. Not just about performance—but about responsibility.



Bob Kraft, USMAPS. 1977

Another moment stayed with me.

A five-mile run. Fatigue set in. My pace dropped. I began to fall behind. The Commander came alongside me. He didn't slow down. "Everyone's tired," he said. "The difference is who keeps moving." Then he asked the question that stayed with me: "Soldier—or quitter?" There was no speech. No motivation beyond that. Just a decision. I kept moving. That question followed me long after the run ended. Into competition. Into duty. Into moments where stopping would have been easier—and costly.

Long before I wore a uniform, someone had already begun shaping my direction. Major General John Waggener. He entered my life when I was fifteen years old. A family friend—but more than that. He paid attention. Not casually. Intentionally. We played tennis together. But what stayed with me wasn't the matches. It was the conversations. He saw potential—and treated it as something to be developed. He opened doors. Opportunities I didn't fully understand at the time. The Defense Language Institute, Monterey, California. Intelligence work. Direction.

He never presented it as influence. He simply said: “Keep serving. Call if you need anything.” That kind of mentorship doesn’t announce itself. It operates quietly. But it changes trajectory. It changed mine.

Later, I was assigned to Germany during the Cold War. A place where readiness wasn’t theoretical. It was constant. Tension existed beneath everything. Not visible. But always present.

Even there, tennis remained part of my life.

I competed—and won. Singles. Doubles. Mixed doubles. Co-ranked number one in U.S. Army Europe.

Performance opened another door. I was called in by Major General Oliver Dillard—the Army’s Director of Intelligence in Europe. “That focus under pressure,” he said, “is what we need.” That moment marked another shift. Not recognition.

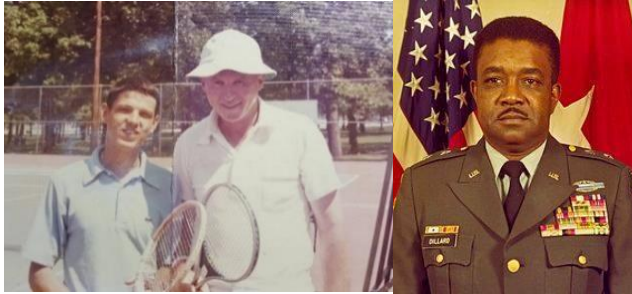
Responsibility. Dillard became more than a superior. He became a mentor. Our conversations went beyond assignment. He didn’t just tell me what to do. He shaped how I thought.

That’s what real mentorship does. It doesn’t give you answers. It changes how you process them. Military service reshaped me. Externally, it gave structure. Every decision carried weight. Every action extended beyond the individual.



Bob Kraft wins, Heidelberg, Germany. 1978

You learned quickly: What you do affects more than you. That awareness changes behavior. The pattern is clear. USMAPS. Waggener. Dillard. Each played a role. Each added something different. Discipline. Direction. Perspective.



Bob, MG John Waggener; MG Oliver Dillard

It felt like preparation for a career. It wasn't. It was preparation for something broader. A life that would require steadiness under pressure. The ability to lead without needing control. What was being formed wasn't just capability. It was character.

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart...” — Colossians 3:23

That principle had already taken hold. Not through instruction. Through repetition. Through expectation. Through example. One decision at a time. One responsibility at a time. The training wasn't over. It was becoming real.

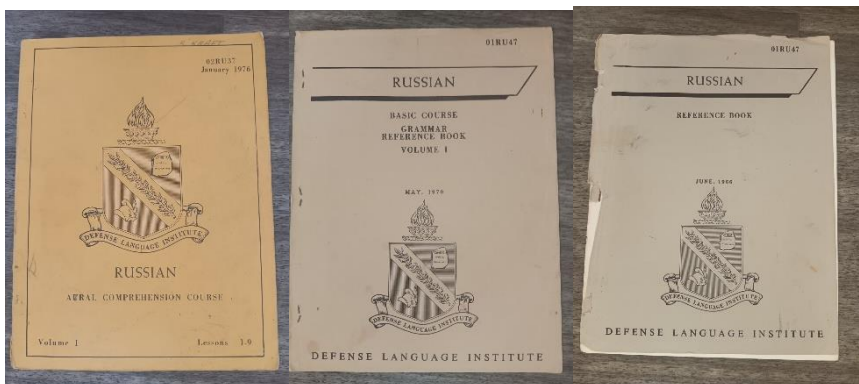
Chapter 7: The People, the Wall, and the Mission

“Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.” — 1 Corinthians 4:2

Theme: Mission-first—executing your duty with discipline, even when the role is unseen and the stakes are high.

I was supposed to listen. That was the assignment. Headphones on. Signals moving through the air. Russian carried through static instead of conversation. Structured. Controlled. Predictable. It fit part of me. But not all of me.

The shift came without announcement. A new assignment. Different responsibilities. Work connected to the Red Army Faction (RAF). The RAF was a communist terrorist group operating in Europe kidnapping and murdering German citizens and US soldiers including from my own unit.



DLI Course books, 1976

From my office in Stuttgart, Germany. No headlines. No visible action. It was quieter than that. Files. Coordination. Fragments of information that had to be aligned correctly—or not at all. That was the first time I understood something clearly: The mission doesn't depend on visibility. It depends on precision. Details mattered. Small errors carried larger consequences. Nothing was insignificant. That understanding stayed with me. But I didn't fully grasp it until Berlin.

Berlin wasn't like any place I had been.

Not because of the Berlin Wall. Because of what the Wall created. Pressure. You felt it before you saw it. In the way streets ended at the Wall. In the way people paused before speaking. In the space between what was said—and what wasn't. The Wall wasn't just structure. It was presence. It divided more than land. It divided Freedom from oppression. Everything in the city moved around it. Whether acknowledged or not.

And then there were the people. They lived with that pressure daily. Not occasionally. Constantly. They adapted. Watched carefully. Understood things without needing them explained. Conversations carried weight. A glance could communicate more than a sentence. You learned quickly: What matters most is often not spoken. That environment required awareness.

For the first time, I wasn't trying to fit into the assignment. I fit it. Berlin demanded perception. And I could operate there. The Wall created the pressure. The people carried it. The mission moved through both. They weren't separate. They were the same environment. That's where I found my role. Not in visibility. Not in recognition. In reliability. Present. Aware. Consistent.

Doing the work that allows everything else to function.

That kind of work doesn't draw attention. But without it—the system breaks. That understanding carried forward. Not just in Berlin. Later—in places where the environment was different, but the structure was the same. Communist systems. Controlled

systems. Environments where what is visible is only part of what is real. The pattern didn't change.

Eventually, Berlin service ended. Assignments always do. I moved into work connected to USA embassy personnel in Iran and their families, but I remained in my new station assignment of Heidelberg, Germany. Preparation. Coordination. Tracking movement. It wasn't routine but preparation for instability. For the possibility that conditions could shift without warning. They did on November 4, 1979 with the embassy takeover and fifty-two hostages, many of the very people I spoke with.

That's where we operated. Lists. Names. Plans that might never be used. But had to be right. Because if the moment came—there would be no time to correct them. That's when I understood the mission fully. It isn't defined by the events people remember. It's defined by what allows those moments to happen without collapse. Structure. Order. Precision. And people. People who operate without recognition. Without acknowledgment. But with responsibility. By then, I knew exactly where I belonged. Not at the front. In the place where awareness holds all things together. Where details matter. Where consistency builds trust. Where failure is not visible—but its effects are.

Berlin taught me that. Through environment. The people. The Wall. The mission. All required the same thing: Steadiness. Awareness. Reliability. And in that space—unseen, but essential—I found my place.

Mission Creed

I stand where I am placed. I execute what is in front of me.

I do not measure my value by visibility. I measure it by consistency.

I remain alert—to what is said, and what is not.

I do not overlook small details. They carry larger consequences.

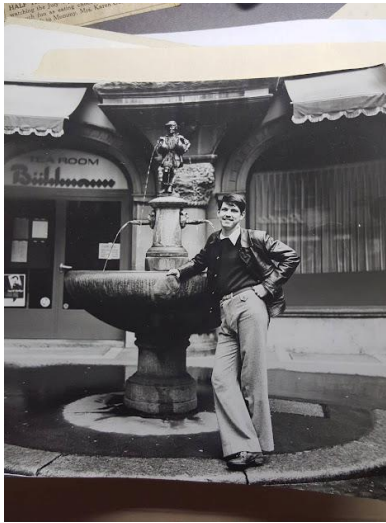
From Tennis Courts to Public Squares

I act with integrity when unseen. I remain steady when conditions shift.

I adapt without hesitation. I remain dependable under pressure.

I do not require recognition to perform.

I require discipline. I require awareness. I require trust.



Bob Kraft, Lucerne, Switzerland. 1976

Chapter 8: The Berlin Wall — Witness to Freedom and Oppression

“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” — Joshua 1:9

Theme: Courage in the face of real oppression, anchored in Christ’s presence.

The Cold War stopped being theory the moment I stood in front of the Berlin Wall, West Germany. It wasn’t political. It wasn’t abstract. It was concrete. Gray. Immovable. Deliberate. It existed for one purpose: Control.

Guard towers rose above it. Armed sentries watched without distraction. On one side, people moved freely. On the other, movement ended. The contrast wasn’t subtle. It was absolute. The Wall didn’t suggest restriction. It enforced it.



Berlin Wall 1970s

What stayed with me most were the crosses.

They stood near the Wall—simple markers. Each one representing a life. Someone who had tried to cross to freedom. Someone who believed freedom was worth the risk. Young men. Young women. Lives reduced to markers in the ground. Not statistics. Decisions.



Berlin Wall Crosses

One evening, I stood there as the air turned cold. Still. Families on opposite sides. Close enough to see each other through windows. But not close enough to touch or hear. Bodies could not follow.

Then, for a brief moment, a communist east German guard on the other side looked directly at me. No words. No movement. Just recognition. In that moment, something became clear. Freedom is not automatic. It is not guaranteed. It is held. And someone is always paying the cost.

Later, I was stationed at the Fulda Gap. A narrow countryside corridor. One of the most likely paths for a communist full military Soviet invasion. There, tension wasn't silent. Every morning before sunrise, the ground began to shake. M60 tanks rolled forward. Heavy. Relentless. Cobra helicopters cut low across the sky. Their rotors slicing through the air. Engines roared. Tracks struck pavement. The sound carried across the landscape. It became a rhythm. Not of war. Of readiness.

I stood at the window and watched as they moved into the fog. Each morning carried the same understanding: This could change without warning. One morning, another soldier stood beside me. He watched in silence. Then said: “That sound means we’re still free.” No explanation. None needed. Freedom wasn’t being preserved by ideas. It was being held in place. Daily. By people willing to stand in its defense.

The Berlin Wall and the Fulda Gap stripped away illusion.

Oppression does not sustain itself quietly. It requires force. Structure. Control. Freedom requires something different. Vigilance. Courage. People willing to stand—before it’s too late.

On one side, there was movement. Choice. Expression. On the other—Silence. Restriction. Observation. The difference wasn’t political. It was human. That understanding stayed with me. Not as theory. As memory. Something seen. Something felt. Something that could not be ignored.

The Wall did more than divide a city. It revealed a truth. Freedom is fragile. And if it is not defended—it is taken.

Chapter 9: Waiting for the Unthinkable — Intelligence, Readiness, and the Reality of Cold War Europe

“You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.” — Isaiah 26:3

Theme: Perfect peace under constant tension through trust in Christ.

After the Berlin Wall, the Cold War was no longer distant. It was immediate. Not something studied. Something lived. Stationed in Germany, readiness was constant. Not heightened. Not occasional. Headquarters never stopped. Lights stayed on. Phones rang day and night. Information moved continuously—signals, reports, fragments that required attention. Nothing was dismissed. Because nothing was truly small.



Bob Kraft's office, VII Corps, Stuttgart, Germany. 1977

In that environment, a single detail could carry weight far beyond itself.

Maps tracked movement. Updates came without warning. Small shifts were analyzed as potential signals. Because sometimes they were. There were no guarantees. Peace existed. But only because vigilance never stopped. That reality changes how you think. Fear was present. But it couldn't lead. Discipline took its place. The same discipline built on the court began to serve a different purpose. Not performance. Stability. You learn to function anyway. To think clearly when conditions are unclear. That becomes the standard.

At night, I studied. Coursework from Fort Huachuca, Arizona. Subjects that explained systems—how they operate, how they sustain control. Communism. Soviet doctrine. Counterintelligence. Investigations. National Intelligence. In addition, German and French.



Patterns began to emerge. Centralized authority. Surveillance. Control of information. Language used—to shape perception. At the time, it was academic. Later, it would become recognition.

What I studied in theory, I would eventually see in practice.

But even then, something was missing. Systems explain structure. They don't explain people. That understanding would come later. Language training reinforced something else. Precision.

At the Defense Language Institute, there was no margin for error. Words mattered. Tone mattered. Clarity mattered. "If you don't hear it correctly," one instructor said, "you're already behind." Precision wasn't preference. It was requirement.

Later, in Germany, I studied language again. This time from someone who had lived through the Germany division of west for freedom and east for communism. She didn't just teach German vocabulary. She carried history. Through her, separation became personal. Not political. Human.

With top-secret clearance came responsibility.

Each morning, I carried a locked briefcase into the war room. Inside—encrypted intelligence. Information that influenced decisions at levels I would never see directly. The result wasn't visible. But it was real. At times, tension would escalate. Soviet movement increased. Signals intensified. Units prepared. Everything shifted toward readiness. Then—just as quickly—everything stood down. No resolution. Just repetition. That was the pattern. Tension without conclusion. Over time, that environment builds something. Steadiness. The ability to remain composed without resolution. To function inside uncertainty.

Tennis gave me structure. The military refined it. But something deeper was forming. An internal steadiness. A quiet strength that didn't depend on conditions. It showed itself when pressure increased. When decisions carried weight. I see now it clearly. Europe wasn't just assignment. It was shaping what came next.

Systems revealed how control operates. Language revealed how opinion is shaped. Responsibility revealed how fragile freedom can be. But the most important lesson came from something less seen. From the men and women around me. Some carried something I didn't yet fully understand. Calm. Not surface-level. Not forced. Anchored. They operated under the same pressure. The same uncertainty. But without instability.

There is a difference between external control— and internal peace. One depends on environment. The other does not. That distinction would matter later. In places where pressure increased. Where control became more visible. Communist China. Hong Kong.

But even then, the foundation was already being set. Quietly. Steadily. Without announcement. Readiness is not just physical. Not just mental. It is internal. It is what holds when everything else shifts. And when it is present—you can stand. Even when the outcome is unclear.

Chapter 10: From Baseline to Christ

“I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.” — Philippians 4:13

Theme: Jesus used my rise and my physical collapse to shift my identity from performance to dependence on Jesus.

I was never a world-class tennis player. But I could compete with them. I trained relentlessly. I won tournaments. In Germany. In Canada. In the USA. I competed alongside top university players—and held my ground. I understood the game. Discipline. Endurance. Control. Tennis wasn’t just something I did. It was how I measured myself.

Wherever I went, my racket went with me.

Tennis gave structure, identity, and over time, something shifted. What began as discipline became dependence. My confidence rested in performance. In conditioning. In my ability to endure. My body was my instrument. And I trusted it.

Then it failed. Not suddenly. Gradually. Fatigue came first. Persistent. Unexplained. Then diagnosis. Illness of Viral Mononucleosis. Not something you fight through. Not something you outwork. Strength faded. Endurance disappeared. The system I trusted stopped responding. For the first time, effort wasn’t enough. And that realization cut deeper than the illness itself.

Who am I—if I cannot perform?

There was no immediate answer. Only silence. Recovery didn’t come quickly. Weeks turned into months. Months into a year. Even when I returned, something had changed. The strength I once

depended on was no longer there. The future I had built around performance began to dissolve. For an athlete, that loss is more than physical. It is identity.

The question remained. Who am I—without this? Without the game. Without the edge. Without the certainty that effort would produce results. There was no way to avoid it. Only to face it. And in that space—something shifted. Not externally. Internally. The foundation I had relied on was gone. And what remained had to be rebuilt. Slowly, a different understanding began to form.

Identity was never meant to rest on performance.

Because performance cannot be sustained. What feels permanent—is not. It felt like loss. I understand now it differently. It was exposure. What I had built my identity on—was not stable enough to hold it. So it was removed. Not as punishment. As redirection.

As my competitive path narrowed, new doors opened. Coaching. Leadership. Responsibility for others. Instead of proving myself—I began investing in others. And something unexpected happened. Purpose replaced performance. The same discipline remained. But it was no longer self-centered. It was outward. What I had built on the court began to transfer. Strategy. Consistency. Focus under pressure. But now it served something different. People.

The illness didn't take something from me. It exposed something in me. Dependence. Had I remained strong, I might have continued building my identity on something temporary. Instead, I was forced to confront what remained when strength was removed. And that is where the shift began. Not into weakness. Into something deeper. A different kind of strength. One not dependent on performance. But on something beyond it.

*“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” —
Philippians 4:13*

At the time, I thought strength was something I generated. It wasn't. It was something I was being led toward. Through loss.

Through limitation. Through the removal of what I trusted most.
The racket never left my hand. But it no longer defined me. Tennis
had built my discipline. Jesus Christ would redefine my identity.
What felt like the end of direction—was the beginning of calling.
And it would lead far beyond anything I had planned.

Chapter 11: The Bob Kraft Tennis Schools and Beyond

“Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.” — Proverbs 16:3

Theme: God establishing my mission through the work.

After Bollettieri’s camp, something had changed. I was no longer just a player. I had become a teacher. Competition had driven me. But coaching revealed something different. Winning satisfies for a moment. Growth lasts.

Tennis became more than a game.

It became a connection point. A way to build trust. A way to reach people. After the military, another shift took place. I was no longer operating under orders. I was responsible for direction. In 1980, I started my own tennis schools. No investors. No guarantees. Just discipline, experience, and a willingness to build. Public courts. Private clubs. Wherever there was space—I contracted for and I taught. The fundamentals were simple. Grip. Footwork. Timing. But that wasn’t the real work. The real work was internal. Discipline. Focus. Responsibility.

Students often arrived thinking tennis was only about winning. They left understanding it was also about control. Control of effort. Control of mindset. Control of response. That’s what shaped them totally.

The memory of one student stays with me. He came from a broken home. Unfocused. Inconsistent. I recognized something in him. Not only talent. Potential. So, I challenged him. Show up. Daily. No excuses. At first, nothing changed. Then—slowly—it did. Consistency replaced distraction. Focus replaced uncertainty. His

game improved. But more importantly—he believed in himself. He earned a university scholarship. But that wasn’t the real result. He gained direction.

That’s when it became clear. This was never just about tennis. It was about influence. As the schools grew, word spread. Not because of results alone—but because of what was being built behind them. Parents noticed. Not just stronger players—but more disciplined individuals. The program expanded. Hundreds became thousands. Talent mattered. But it wasn’t decisive. Commitment was.

The same principles I had learned under pressure became the foundation. Consistency. Mental strength. Accountability. And the pattern repeated. The best mindset often won. Not just in matches. In life.

Tennis began to open doors.

Not just locally. Globally. Different cultures. Different systems. But the same principles applied. Effort. Discipline. Consistency. Those translated everywhere. It was direction. Leadership took on new weight. Students trusted me. Parents trusted me. Staff relied on me. That responsibility mattered. My words shaped confidence. My actions modeled discipline. Consistency built trust. I learned something that stayed with me: Leadership is not position. It is example. You don’t demand it. You demonstrate it. By showing up. By doing the work. Daily.



Bob Kraft Team vs. American Club, Hong Kong 1996

Coaching built patience. Leadership built responsibility. Discipline built endurance. Influence revealed purpose. By this point, something had shifted internally. Tennis had given me direction. But it was no longer the destination.

Faith had become central.

What once drove me—performance, growth, success—was being redefined. Not removed. Redirected.

“Commit to the Lord whatever you do...” — Proverbs 16:3

That principle was no longer abstract. It was active. The work remained. But the purpose changed. What I built was no longer just for progress. It was for impact. Looking back, those years were not the outcome. They were preparation. A foundation being set. For something larger. Something that would move beyond courts and competition—into places where discipline, leadership, and faith would all be tested.

At the time, I didn’t see the full picture. But the direction was clear. And it was already moving forward.

Chapter 12: The Provision for the Journey

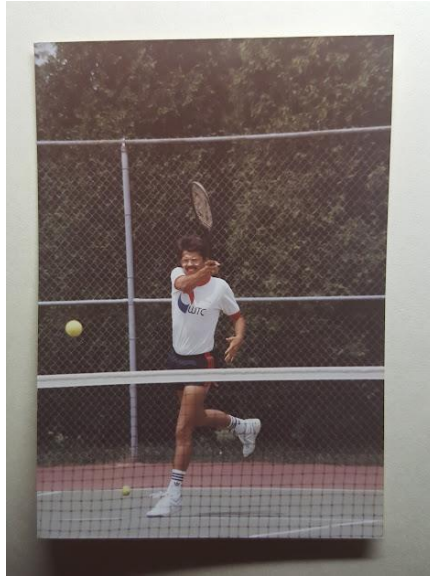
“And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.” — Philippians 4:19

Theme: God’s Provision Through Unexpected Means

Provision doesn’t always arrive the way you expect. Sometimes it doesn’t come as income. It comes as access. As opportunity. As supply. Looking back, that pattern is clear. Throughout my tennis career, I was supported in ways that didn’t always look like provision at first.

At fourteen years old, I received my first sponsorship. Blue Star strings. The first synthetic gut string company. Not a contract. Not a salary. Just support. But it mattered. It allowed me to continue.

Soon after came shoes. Tred 2. Bata. Early versions of what would later become an entire industry of high-performance sports shoes. At the time, it was simple. I had what I needed to keep going.



Bob Kraft 1970s

As my level increased, so did the opportunities.

In 1975, Bancroft gave me my first racket. Then Dunlop. That Dunlop relationship stayed for decades. Not just as a player—but later as a consultant. Working on racket development. It wasn't just equipment anymore. It was trust. At one point, I stepped away briefly. Tried Donnay. But I returned. Some relationships hold because they are built over time.

Then came Prince. That was different. Not incremental. Abundant. Rackets. Clothing. Shoes. Bags. Strings. More than I needed. More than I expected. And it didn't stop at playing. It extended into coaching. Then into my role as a chaplain on the professional tennis tour. The support followed the calling.

Other brands came in seasons. Wilson. Adidas. Reebok, Pony. Some stayed briefly. Some longer. Each played a role. As I moved further into ministry, the pattern didn't stop. Head provided rackets. Diadora supplied clothing.

Later, Fila. Even then, something stood out. The contract I signed mirrored those of professional players. Including a clause: A financial bonus for winning a Grand Slam. By that point, I was in my fifties. The possibility wasn't realistic. But the message was clear. Provision doesn't always align with logic. It aligns with purpose. None of these arrangements provided direct income. But they provided what I needed. Equipment. Resources. Support. They sustained the work.



Bob Kraft in Germany 1978

I see provision.

Looking back, I don't just see sponsorship. Not always in money. But in supply. Not always in what I expected. But in what was required. At the right time. Through the right channels. Over and over again. It followed a pattern. When purpose is aligned—provision follows. Not always predictably. But consistently.

In the Bible, the apostle Paul worked as a tentmaker. Not separate from his mission—but alongside it. That model shaped my own path. I worked. God provided. I served. At the same time. There was no separation between calling and labor. They moved together. Provision supported mission.

The lesson is simple. What you need will come—not always as income, but as provision. And when it does—it is meant to be used. Not stored. Not wasted. But directed. Toward the purpose it was given for.

Chapter 13: The Surrender That Changed Everything — Called to the Nations

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come.” — 2 Corinthians 5:17

Theme: When Christ calls, identity shifts.

In 1985, I made the most important decision of my life:

I surrendered fully to Jesus Christ. Not interest. Not partial commitment. Surrender. Everything I had built—discipline, identity, direction—was no longer mine to control. It belonged to Jesus. That decision did not elevate my life. It redirected it.

From Performance to Purpose

Until that point, my life had been defined by performance. Tennis gave me identity. The military gave me structure. Success gave me direction. But none of them answered the deeper question: Why?

Why the discipline? Why the preparation? Why the opportunities? Success can carry you far—but it cannot tell you fully why you are there. Jesus Christ completed the picture of my understanding.

Obedience Begins Where Understanding Ends

In December 1985, I stepped onto a church bus headed to Mexico City with Youth With a Mission. I did not go with a plan. I went in obedience. Mexico changed everything. Poverty was not hidden—it was visible. Need was not theoretical—it was immediate. Faith was not discussed—it was lived. I saw people with almost

nothing—yet filled with something I had not seen before: Joy that did not depend on circumstance. That exposure stripped away illusion. Faith was no longer belief. It became reality.

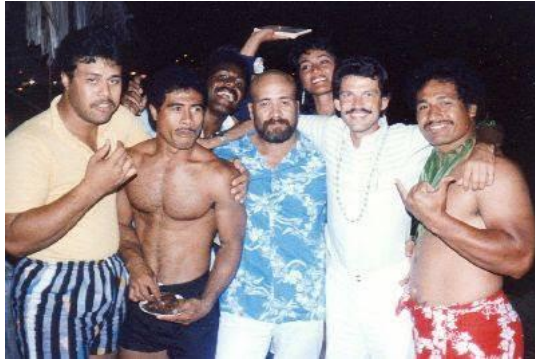
Kona — The Forge

That led me to Kailua-Kona, Hawaii. There, in what was then Pacific and Asia Christian University, I was reshaped. Not externally. Internally. Scripture. Prayer. Discipleship. Community.

Everything I had relied on before was being replaced with something deeper. I was no longer an athlete who believed in Jesus. I became a servant of Jesus—who happened to know tennis. That distinction changed everything.

A Life Given, Not Preserved

Mission is not adventure. It is obedience. It requires release. Ambition. Security. All surrendered. In Kona, I made a second decision: My future would not be built by my own strategy. It would be led by Jesus Christ.



Bob Kraft with friends at Kailua-Kona, Hawaii. 1986

The World Opens

Soon after, I was sent across Asia: The Philippines. Taiwan. Hong Kong. Macao. Communist China. South Korea. Japan. Different

systems. Different cultures. Different pressures. But the same truth became clear in every place: God was already there. We were not bringing Him. God was bringing us. We were joining Jesus.

Learning to Move Differently

The mission changed how I saw people. Not as athletes. Not as students. Not as opportunities. But as lives. Valuable. Complex. Created with purpose. I learned to listen before speaking. To observe before acting. To serve before leading. That shift was not optional. It was required.

Tennis Becomes a Method of Access

What I once used for competition became something else entirely. A tool. Tennis opened doors where words could not. It created access in places that were otherwise closed. It built trust across language, culture, and political systems. What I had trained for—without knowing it—became mission-critical. None of it had been wasted.

The Identity Shift

The greatest change was not where I went. It was who I became. My identity moved: From performance → to purpose. From control → to surrender. From self → to Jesus Christ. That shift is irreversible. Once it happens—you do not go back.

The Future Hidden — The Calling Clear

I did not know where this would lead. I did not see my future in Hong Kong. I did not see my future in communist China. I did not see the public square. But I did not need to. Because decision had replaced direction.

No Turning Back

That decision in 1985 was not a moment. It was a line. Once crossed—everything changed. The race I had been running ended. A new one began. Not measured by results. But by obedience. Not driven by recognition. But by calling. Not sustained by strength. But by Jesus. Everything that followed—every nation, every risk, every moment—traces back to that surrender. Because when a life is placed fully in the hands of Jesus Christ—It will be used. Exactly where it is needed.

Chapter 14: At an orphanage, the call to Tennis Ministry International came.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight.” — Proverbs 3:5–6

Theme: God does not waste the gifts He places in our hands.

The call did not come on a tennis court. It came on a quiet street. On one side—an orphanage. On the other—a private tennis club. Two worlds. Separated by a road. Divided by reality.

The Contrast

The orphanage in Monterrey, Mexico was simple. Limited resources. Basic conditions. Children with little. Across the street—the tennis club. Order. Structure. Opportunity. Everything the orphanage did not have. The distance between them was small. The gap between them was not.

The Crossing

A racket was already in hand. That mattered. Because tennis opens doors. Not by force. By familiarity. So, the street was crossed. No plan. No strategy. Just movement. Inside the club, the environment was familiar. Courts. Players. Structure. Food. Clothing. The language was understood. Not spoken—but played. Connection formed quickly. Questions followed. “Where are you staying?”- My reply, “Across the street. At the orphanage.” Pause. They had never noticed it. It had always been there. Unseen.

The Moment of Clarity

That was the moment. Clear. Direct. Undeniable. Tennis was not the destination. It was the bridge. It could connect two worlds that never meet. It could move people across lines they did not even realize existed. It could open access where words could not.

The Birth of a Mission

Nothing formal was created that day. No organization. No structure. No announcement. But something began. A direction. A calling. Tennis Ministry International was not planned. It was revealed. What had once been used for performance changed function. From winning → to reaching. From competition → to connection. From self → to others. The tool remained the same. The purpose did not.

Kona — The Confirmation

That moment required grounding. So, the next step was taken. Kailua-Kona, Hawaii. A place of training. Of stripping away what was not essential. Of building what would last. Scripture replaced uncertainty. Prayer replaced control. Community replaced self. The call was not just felt. It was confirmed. The decision became clear: The gifts were not personal possessions. They were assignments. To be used. Directed. Given. Not stored. Not protected. Not wasted.



Youth With A Mission; Kailua-Kona, Hawaii.

The Pattern Established

That street in Mexico defined everything that followed. Go where access exists. Build trust. Bridge gaps. Serve first. Let God do the rest. What began as a single street crossing expanded. Nations. Cultures. Contacts. The same pattern applied everywhere. Tennis opened doors. Faith carried the message. People responded. At the time, the future was hidden. Hong Kong was not visible. Communist China was not understood. But the direction was clear. And that was enough.

The Line That Remains

Two worlds. One street. One decision to cross. Everything that followed can be traced back to that moment. Because when God places something in your hand—even a tennis racket. It is never just for you. It is for what comes next.

Chapter 15: A Mission Takes Shape

“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.” — Mark 16:15

Theme: Beginning a global mission centered on Jesus Christ.

When I stepped away from tennis playing and coaching, I carried discipline. When I left military service in Europe, I carried something deeper—an awareness of how fragile freedom truly is. But even with those experiences, a question remained: **Why was I here?** What was the purpose behind everything I had been trained to do?

What Success Could Not Answer

Tennis had given me identity. The military had given me structure. But neither answered the deeper longing within me—a quiet, persistent question about meaning beyond personal achievement. That longing became the beginning of real transformation.

A Faith That Grew Quietly

Faith did not come to me in a single dramatic moment. It grew slowly—through encounters with people whose lives were anchored in Jesus Christ. There was something different about them. A steadiness. A peace. A sense of purpose that didn’t shift with circumstances. I had seen instability. I had seen pressure. I had seen systems built on control. But this was different.

Jesus offered something no system could provide—internal freedom. Unshakable strength. Purpose beyond circumstance.

The Seed That Took Root

One conversation stayed with me. A fellow soldier shared how Jesus had carried him through a near-death training incident. He didn't speak with uncertainty. He spoke with conviction. That moment planted something in me. A seed. And over time, it grew. I began to understand that faith in Jesus Christ was not weakness. It was strength. It brought clarity in uncertainty. Peace in instability. Meaning beyond success.

Seeing Tennis Differently

As my faith deepened, my perspective began to change. Tennis was no longer just a sport. It became something else entirely. A tool. A way to connect. A bridge across cultures, languages, and systems. It opened doors. It built trust. It created conversations that might never have happened otherwise.

And behind every athlete—no matter how successful—there was something deeper. Pressure. Uncertainty. Questions about identity and purpose. Many had achieved everything they had set out to achieve. Yet something was still missing.

A Mission Is Born

In 1988, I founded Tennis Ministry International. The vision was simple—but powerful: Combine tennis with faith in Jesus Christ to support athletes not only professionally, but personally. It was never about forcing belief. It was about presence. Listening. Encouraging. Creating space for real questions. And when invited—pointing to Christ.

Where the World Meets Pressure

That calling led me into the highest levels of the sport. I began attending major tournaments around the world—including the Grand Slams: Melbourne, Australia. Paris, France. Wimbledon, England. Flushing Meadows, New York.



Australian Open and Queens Club, London

On the surface, they were places of excellence and achievement. But behind every performance was a person carrying weight. In quiet moments—on practice courts, in locker rooms, in private conversations—I listened. Sometimes I encouraged. I prayed. Always, I was present. Trust didn't come quickly. But over time, it came.

One top player, battling burnout, confided in me during a Grand Slam tournament. Through honest conversation—and prayer—something shifted. He found renewed purpose. Not in the game—but beyond it.

A Global Path Unfolds

What began as a simple idea grew. Tennis Ministry International expanded across borders—connecting people across cultures, political systems, and languages. And through that expansion, new doors began to open. Doors I could not have planned. Doors that would eventually lead me into communist China. At the time, I didn't see how far it would go. But Jesus did.

From Achievement to Assignment

Founding the ministry—marked a turning point. It was the shift from self-focused achievement to Jesus Christ-centered service. Everything that came before—discipline, training, competition,

leadership—aligned under a new purpose. None of it had been wasted. Everything had been building toward this.

Sent Forward

The mission was no longer theoretical. It was active. And it was about to move into places where faith would not be easy—where pressure would be real, where risk would increase, where conviction would be tested.

Communist China. Hong Kong.

Environments that would demand everything I had been prepared for. But I was ready. Not because of my own strength—but because Jesus Christ had prepared me, called me, and sustained me.

The Work Begins

That moment—the founding of the ministry—was not the destination. It was the beginning. A step into something much larger than I could see and myself. Because when purpose aligns with calling—the path doesn't get easier. It gets clearer. And the work—has only just begun.

Chapter 16: Where Doors Should Have Been Closed — A Desolate Tennis Land

“Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.” — Proverbs 16:3

Theme: Christ using tennis as a doorway to reach hearts in a closed land.

Communist China was in my heart long before I ever lived there. My first visit in 1986 left an impression I could not shake. I saw tennis courts—well built, well maintained—and completely empty. No players. No coaches. No life.

To others, it might have looked like absence. To me, it looked like possibility. Something waiting. Something unfinished. And in that quiet, I sensed something deeper—a conviction I could not explain at the time: I would return.

Stepping Into the Unknown

By 1991, that conviction became action. I made a decision that changed everything. I sold my business interests in the United States—security, stability, success—and stepped into uncertainty. Not with a detailed plan. But with trust.

Hong Kong became my base—a gateway between worlds. From there, I began entering mainland communist China. Not forcefully. Carefully. Relationally.

A Bridge No System Could Block

Tennis opened the door. It was neutral. Respected. Non-political. A language understood without translation. Where words might be

restricted, tennis was accepted. And through it, trust began to grow. Slowly. But steadily.

Multiplication, Not Moments

My mission was never just to teach players. It was to build something that would last. The strategy was simple—but powerful: Train coaches. Because coaches multiply impact. They develop players. They build programs. They sustain growth long after one person leaves.

To support that vision, I brought in the Professional Tennis Registry. They became a key force in developing coaches across the region. Over time, something began to change. The empty courts filled. University teams formed. High school programs developed. Interest spread. Tennis began to take root in communist China.



Bob Kraft, national university coaches, communist China

More Than a Game

But tennis was never the goal. It was the doorway. The deeper purpose was always Jesus Christ. Not through force. Not through public proclamation. But through relationship. Through integrity. Through presence. Through service. On the courts, trust was built. And in that trust, conversations followed. Quiet. Personal. Real. I

spoke about hope. About purpose. About Jesus. And life's began to open. Not just to a better game—but to something far greater.

Where Calling Meets Obedience

Those years in Hong Kong and mainland communist China remain among the most meaningful of my life. It was where calling met obedience. Where preparation met purpose. Doors opened that no human effort could have forced. And lives were changed—not by strategy alone, but by the Truth of Jesus Christ.

The Mission Expands

The path did not stop there. It widened. I began serving as Chaplain on the professional tennis tour, both officially and unofficially at the same time—walking alongside players competing at the highest levels in the world.

Men and women under constant pressure. Fame. Expectation. Performance demands that never eased. I met them not as athletes—but as people. I listened. I counseled. I prayed when invited. And I reminded them of something many had forgotten: Their worth was not found in rankings. It was found in Jesus Christ.

Over time, I had the privilege of connecting with all of the top 125 players in the world men and women—including those who reached number one. Not to promote something—but to plant seeds. To water. To walk alongside. Watching those seeds grow into faith became one of the greatest joys of my life—second only to my children.



Singapore tennis camp, 1992

What God Does With What We Give

The pattern is clear. Jesus Christ takes what we place in Jesus' hands—even something as simple as a tennis racket—and uses it in ways we could never imagine. To open nations. To build relationships. To change lives. Including my own. Because what begins as willingness...when placed in Jesus's hands...becomes something far greater than we could ever build ourselves. And Jesus is still doing it.

Chapter 17: Inside the Communist System — Thirty-five Years

“I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.” — Matthew 10:16

Theme: Living with wisdom and courage under Christ’s guidance in communist China.

When I first entered communist China in 1986, the contrast was immediate. I had seen the Berlin Wall—its concrete, visible oppression. But this was different. This was not a wall you could point to. It was a system you lived inside. Constant. Subtle. Seemingly invisible—yet always present.



Bob Kraft, communist China, 1992

A Door That Shouldn’t Have Opened

Tennis became my entry point. It gave me legitimacy. It gave me access. Players welcomed me. Coaches trusted me. Universities

invited me in. Even communist leaders stepped onto the court. Through rallies and shared competition, something began to form—trust.

I taught technique. I taught discipline. But when the moment was right—I offered something more. Encouragement. Perspective. Faith in Jesus Christ.

Living Under Watch

Control was everywhere. But it was rarely loud. People spoke carefully. Certain topics were avoided. Every conversation carried awareness. You learned quickly—someone could be listening.

My military training helped me recognize the patterns. When to speak. When to remain silent. How to move with awareness. But even more than training, I relied on something deeper—discernment. Wisdom. Timing; that came from Jesus alone.

Faith That Could Not Be Contained

What surprised me most was not the control. It was the faith. It didn't disappear under pressure. It adapted. Underground churches met quietly—in homes, in apartments, behind closed doors. Small gatherings. Discreet. Courageous.

I remember one night clearly. A dim room. Flashlight as our only light. We opened Scripture carefully. As Jesus was shared, something remarkable happened—faces lit up. Not with noise. But with understanding. We sang worship songs without sound—only moving our lips. Even entering required caution. Two at a time. Never as a group. So no attention would be drawn.

Over time, that small gathering grew—to seventy believers. Quiet. Hidden. But strong.

It taught me something I would never forget: No system can contain what Christ sets free in the human heart.

Unexpected Conversations

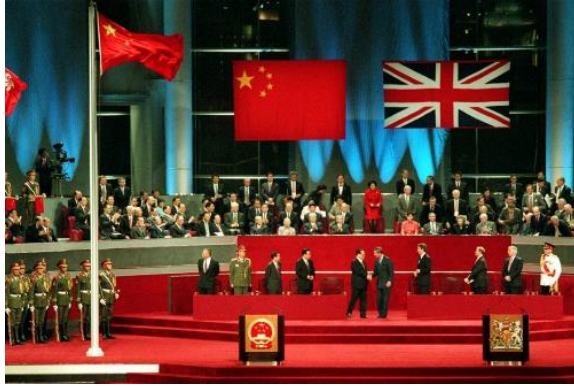
Tennis opened doors I never could have forced. Even with high-ranking officials. Two communist China national figures became regular doubles partners. On the court, we competed. Afterward, we talked. Not about politics—but about life. About family. About belief. About meaning. They were not distant authorities. They were people. Searching. In those moments, I learned something critical—influence is not built through confrontation. It is built through trust. Jesus gave me both the words to speak—and the restraint to listen.

A Window Called Hong Kong

Hong Kong offered something different. Freedom—visible and, open. Expression was not hidden. Conversations were not guarded in the same way. I became part of that environment—gaining residency, building relationships, expanding the ministry. It became both a base and a contrast. A place where what I had seen in mainland communist China could be understood more clearly.

The Storm on the Horizon

But change was coming. In 1997, Hong Kong moved from England to under communist China control. And with it, something familiar began to emerge. The same patterns I had seen before—in Europe, in mainland communist China—began to take shape again. Subtle at first. Then increasingly clear. Restrictions tightening. Voices quieting. Pressure building.



Hong Kong handed from British to communist China, 1997

Prepared to Stand

None of what I had experienced was accidental. Tennis had taught discipline. The military had taught awareness. Mainland communist China had taught discernment.

And Jesus Christ had woven it all together. I was no longer observing. I was prepared. Prepared to stand. Prepared to serve. Prepared to point others toward something greater than any system could offer. Because when pressure rises—what is built inside you is revealed. And what had been built in me was ready for what was coming next.

Chapter 18: The Word They Couldn't Stop — Bringing Bibles

“For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” — Hebrews 4:12

Theme: Christ calling me to bring His living Word into a restricted land.

There was another dimension to my years in communist China—one far deeper than tennis. Tennis opened public doors. But Jesus Christ called me into something private. Something costly. Something eternal.

A Hunger Without Access

In mainland communist China, faith did not disappear. But it was restricted. Controlled. Bibles were scarce. Believers shared single copies. Memorized verses. Sometimes went without entirely.

Faith existed—but it lacked what sustains it fully: the Word of God. And I knew something had to change.

A Calling That Required Courage

I believed Jesus was calling me to act. Not publicly. But quietly. Prayerfully, I began working with trusted partners. Every step required caution. Every decision carried risk. Together, we helped bring hundreds of thousands of Bibles into the country. No announcements. No recognition. Only obedience. To authorities, it would have been seen as subversion. To me, it was something else entirely. Faithfulness.

Each Bible carried more than pages. It carried Jesus. Truth. Hope. Freedom that no system could control.



Chinese Bible-simplified characters

The Day Everything Changed

For a time, the work continued. Quietly. Effectively. Then came 1996. Communist security moved. They raided my house. My office. My warehouse. Everything. They arrested my local staff, all followers of Jesus Christ.

But I wasn't there. At that exact moment, I was in Colorado, USA—visiting ministry partners, completely outside their reach. What could have ended in detention—or worse—became protection. I understood immediately. That chapter was over.

When Obedience Means Leaving

China had become part of me. The people. The players. The believers. Leaving was not something I chose. But it was something I accepted. Because obedience is not always staying. Sometimes, it is stepping away. Not in defeat—but in trust. When God closes a door, He does not abandon the mission. He redirects it.

The Mission Moves Forward

What followed was not a pause. It was a shift. With my background in tennis, Jesus opened another path—the professional

tennis tour. This time, the mission field looked different. World-class athletes. Global stages. Constant pressure. But beneath the surface, the need was the same. Identity. Purpose. Peace.

Behind the Spotlight

On the outside, these players were at the top of their game. Success. Recognition. Achievement. But privately, many wrestled with deeper questions. Who am I beyond performance? What happens when the wins stop? Where does real value come from? And once again—tennis became the bridge.

Presence Over Position

I met them where they were. In locker rooms. On practice courts. In quiet conversations. I listened. I counseled. I prayed when invited. And I reminded them of something they rarely heard: Their worth was not found in rankings. It was found in Jesus Christ.

Nothing Was Wasted

Looking back, the pattern is unmistakable. Every phase had a purpose. The empty courts in mainland communist China. The risks taken in faith. The doors that opened—and the doors that closed. None of it was wasted. Jesus used it all. To reach nations. To build relationships. To place His Word where it was needed most.

A Mission That Cannot Be Stopped

The mission never ended. It simply moved forward. Because when something is placed in the hands of Jesus Christ—it does not stop when circumstances change. It adapts. It expands. It continues. And the same Truth remains: What God begins—no system, no authority, no barrier—can ultimately stop what began. Because God's Word was never meant to be contained. And neither was Jesus Christ's purpose.

Chapter 19: Among Champions

“What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?” — Mark 8:36

Theme: Christ opened the courts of the world so His truth could reach the hearts of champions.

I began the formation of Tennis Ministry in 1986 with a simple conviction: Tennis was the bridge. Christ was the message.

A Door Into the Highest Level

In 1994, that bridge expanded. I began ministering directly to professional tennis players—starting in Hong Kong at a men’s tour event featuring the world’s top-ranked athletes. These were not ordinary environments. They were tightly structured. Highly protected. Surrounded by coaches, agents, media, and security. Access was not given easily. And staying required something more than access. It required integrity.



Bob Kraft, communist China top tennis players, 1986

Earning the Right to Be There

Over time, my presence became familiar. Not because I pushed my way in—but because I stayed consistent. My background as a serious coach gave me credibility. I understood their world: the rankings, the pressure, the injuries, the travel, the mental weight of competition. I didn't have to explain it. I had lived it. And because of that, they listened.

When One Door Closed, Another Opened

In 1996, mainland communist China closed its doors to me. What could have been an ending—became an expansion. I remained based in Hong Kong and began traveling internationally. The mission didn't stop. It grew.

On the World's Biggest Stages

Soon, I found myself at the highest levels of the sport—the Australian Open, the French Open, Wimbledon, the U.S. Open—and tournaments across the world. Year after year, I returned. And with time, relationships deepened. Conversations moved beyond tennis. Into identity. Purpose. Fear. Doubt. Faith. Eternity.



Grand Slam tennis tournaments

Trust Takes Time

Professional players are rarely alone. They are surrounded—by family, by coaches, by those who protect them closely. To stand beside them, those around them had to trust me first. They needed

to know I was genuine. That I believed what I said. That I wanted nothing from them.

A Line That Was Never Crossed

I never asked for anything. No money. No sponsorship. No equipment. No photos. No autographs.

Over the years, I invested \$68,000 USD of my own savings into the mission. At times, modest support came from outside the tour—but every dollar went directly into serving the players. That boundary was intentional. Clear. Uncompromising. I never wanted there to be any confusion—between serving players for Jesus and using them for anything else.

Why That Matters

In the world of professional sports, almost everyone wants something. Access. Exposure. Opportunity. I didn't. I was not there for their fame. I was there for their souls. That distinction mattered. And over time, they recognized it. Trust grew—because there was no hidden agenda.

Presence Over Platform

For years, I moved quietly from tournament to tournament. Consistent. Discreet. Faithful. That consistency opened doors that cannot be forced. I was welcomed into private spaces. Into real conversations. Into moments that never appear on television—victories, losses, injuries, loneliness, marriage struggles, personal crises. Life unfolded. And I stood beside them—not as a promoter, but as a shepherd.

Reaching the Top

Over two decades, the ministry extended to the very top of the sport. Every world number one player—men and women—in singles, doubles, and mixed doubles. Not for recognition. For relationship. Not for headlines. For eternal impact.

What Tennis Opened, Jesus Christ Fulfilled

Looking back, the distinction is clear. Tennis gave me access to champions. But Jesus gave me their hearts. And that—is where the real work was always meant to happen.

Chapter 20: A Different Kind of Number One

“I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.” – 1 Corinthians 3:6-7

Theme: True greatness is not found in being number one in the world, but in being faithfully placed in God’s purpose—serving others, planting His Word, and trusting Him with the unseen results.

Every competitive player, at some point, wants the same thing—to be the best. To stand alone as number one in the world. I was no different. That dream lived in me early. But over time, I came to understand something difficult. I was not going to reach that level as a player.

When the Dream Changes

That realization could have ended my love for the game. Instead, it redirected it. If I could not stand at the very top, I would get as close to it as possible.

Seeing Greatness Up Close

In 1977, while stationed in Germany with the U.S. Army, I attended the French Open for the first time. It was unforgettable. The names I had only read about were now in front of me. Players like Chris Evert and Guillermo Vilas—both number one in the world—stood out immediately. There was something different about them. A presence. A level of focus and composure that

separated them from everyone else. To even imagine speaking with them felt impossible.

A Different Path to the Same Place

Years later, that impossibility became reality. But not in the way I had imagined. I did not arrive as a competitor. I arrived as a chaplain. And in many ways, it became my highest level in the sport. I had not reached number one in ranking—but I had been given access to something deeper.

Among Champions

From the 1980s through the 2010s, I had the privilege of building relationships with the very players I had once watched from a distance. World number ones. Grand Slam champions. Legends of the game. Even former champions from decades earlier—dating back to the 1950s—regularly attended these events.

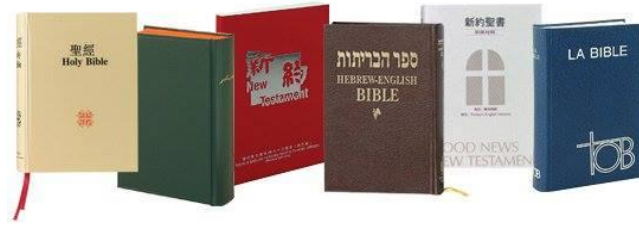
Over time, conversations became relationships. And relationships became trust. For the young player I once was, this was a fulfillment I had never anticipated.

Carrying the Word to the World

One experience stands out above the rest—the Australian Open. Working alongside a ministry I was connected with - The Daily Bread, I was given access to small, hand-sized Bibles translated into the native languages of players from around the world. Hundreds of languages. Some common. Some incredibly rare.

During those weeks, I made it my mission to personally place a Bible into the hands of every player I could reach. Day after day, I walked the grounds—from locker rooms to player lounges to practice courts—carrying Scripture in languages from across the globe.

The task was too large to complete in one place. So I continued.



Bibles from around the world

Finishing the Assignment

I shipped the remaining Bibles ahead to churches in Paris and London. At the French Open, I continued the work. At Wimbledon, I finished it. One by one—placing Scripture into the hands of every player in the top 125 of the world—men and women—players from every corner of the world.

What still amazes me is this: Not one player, to my knowledge, objected. In an environment known for pressure, ego, and intense competition, there was openness. Quiet. Respectful. Years later, players would approach me and say, “I still carry that Bible.” Those moments mattered more than any result on a scoreboard ever could.

Resistance on the Biggest Stage

Not every experience was easy. The U.S. Open proved to be the most difficult.

Tournament leadership at the time resisted any Christian ministry presence. Despite having served there for years, my access was denied for one year’s finals matches. Even with support from top players—including those ranked number one in the world—I was blocked.

On that occasion, two world number one players competing in separate finals offered to extend their credentials so I could remain. Even that was denied. I was escorted off the grounds. Told I would

need to purchase a public ticket—and that I could not remain as a guest of the players. I left that day and never returned.

What Cannot Be Stopped

The following year, those in leadership who had denied access were no longer in power—removed from their positions and out of the sport.

In time, it became clear: God moves in ways we do not always see or understand. But by then, I understood something even more important. This mission is never dependent on access. Or approval. Or favor. What God sets in motion does not rely on human permission to continue.

And it did—in other tournaments, other places, through other doors, reaching lives that could never have been planned.

A Greater Victory

I see the journey differently now. I did not become number one in the world. But I was placed exactly where I was meant to be—among the best in the world. Not to compete against them. But to serve them. And in that calling, I found something greater than any title I once chased. Because the highest place I could reach was never a ranking. It was obedience. And in that—I had already arrived.

Chapter 21: The Man Who Mocked — and Believed. A Miracle Worth Remembering

“For no word from God will never fail.” – Luke 1:37

Theme: God often works in the hearts of people in ways we cannot see, using even resistance, ridicule, and time to prepare them for a personal encounter with Jesus Christ.

In professional tennis, relationships are built over time—sometimes quietly, and sometimes in ways that only make sense years later.

There was a man I came to know well on the tour. He was one of the most influential player manager in the game—representing past and present world number one players. He was respected, connected, and always present where the top athletes gathered.

And he took a particular interest in me.

Years of Ridicule

It wasn't friendship. Not at first. It was something else. He didn't mock me personally—he mocked Jesus Christ. And he used me as the setting for it.

At tournaments, in player areas, in group settings—he would point out that I was a Christian, he was Jewish and then, almost as a performance, begin making comments. It was never angry. Never aggressive. Almost... practiced. Consistent. And always public. I didn't argue with him. There was no confrontation. I would listen,

respond calmly when appropriate, and then let the moment pass. And year after year, it continued.

A Shift in Tone

Then something changed. One year at Wimbledon, he approached me—not with humor or ridicule, but with something quieter. He told me that one of his players—recently ranked number one in the world—wanted me to have a wristband. On it were simple words: **Stay Strong**. The gesture was unexpected. But more than that—the tone was different. Subtle, but unmistakable. I thanked him and received it.

The Pattern Returns

The following year, he invited me to a private house he had rented during Wimbledon. Some of the best players in the world were there. I was included. For a moment, it felt like something had shifted permanently. But during the gathering, the familiar pattern returned. The comments. The public remarks. Clear. Direct. Unchanged. What stood out wasn't what he said—but how others responded. Players looked uncomfortable. Some surprised. But no one stepped in. And neither did I. Because by then, this ridicule was not new.

The Conversation That Changed Everything

Then came the moment I will never forget. At the Australian Open, he approached me privately. No audience. No performance. Just the two of us. He told me the night before he had a dream. In that dream, he said, he met Jesus Christ. And they spoke. As he shared this, I saw something I had never seen in him before. No sarcasm. No humor. No edge. Only seriousness. Only sincerity. And then he said: "I believe in Jesus Christ now."

A Moment That Stands Alone

If someone had told me that story about him, I'm not sure I would have believed it. He had been consistent for years—openly

opposed, publicly vocal, unchanging. And yet here he was. Clear. Direct. Certain. We never spoke again after that conversation. I assumed I would see him at the next tournament.

The Unexpected Ending

Within a few months, he died unexpectedly in his sleep. He was still young. His passing shocked everyone who knew him.

What I Know

I have never forgotten that conversation. I know what I witnessed. I know what I heard. I know the man he had been for years—and I know who he was in that moment. I will not use his name. Some who hear this story may doubt it. Others may question it. But I was there. And I am a witness to it.

A Work Unseen

I see now something I could not see at the time. All those years—the comments, the questions, the public moments—they were not barriers. They were part of a process. A process I did not control. A work I did not fully understand. But one that was unfolding nonetheless.

A Miracle Worth Remembering

I believe with certainty that Jesus met him—just as he described. And that moment mattered more than anything that came before it. Because what looks like resistance is not always rejection. Sometimes—it is the beginning of something deeper. And sometimes, the most unexpected hearts are the ones being prepared all along.

Chapter 22: Spared for a Purpose — Sri Lanka Tsunami

“My times are in God’s hands.” — Psalm 31:15

Theme: Life is fragile, but God’s purposes endure.

The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami remains one of the most sobering reminders of both life’s fragility—and God’s protection.



Sri Lanka, 2004

A Plan That Changed

That Christmas, my wife and our two-year-old daughter were to travel with me to Sri Lanka. It was a beautiful island nation—lush, coastal, almost reminiscent of Hawaii in its tropical beauty.

We had planned everything. A beachfront hotel. Time together. Rest. It was meant to be a Christmas family time.

The Quiet Prompting

But in the days before we were to leave, something unsettled me. Not fear. Not anxiety. Something quieter. Persistent. I brought it to prayer. And the impression remained—delay the trip by one day. Stay in Hong Kong for Christmas. Leave later. There was no logical reason. Everything had already been arranged.

But I had learned, over time, to recognize that kind of prompting—especially when it did not go away. So I made a decision. I chose obedience over convenience. I delayed the departure for myself by one day. Celebrating in Hong Kong with my family on opening the presents in the morning and then leaving in late afternoon on December 25th.

December 26

At 9:00 a.m. on December 26, 2004, the tsunami struck. By then, I had arrived the night before—December 25—but not at the beachfront hotel we had originally booked. Instead, with the change of plans, I was staying in a private home with a local family, set back from the coastline.

My wife and daughter remained in Hong Kong. That morning, I first heard the news on the radio. Then I saw it.

What Was Lost

The coastline was gone. Entire communities—swept away. Homes destroyed. Lives lost within minutes. The hotel where we had planned to stay—destroyed. What had been a place of celebration became a place of devastation. Thousands perished across the region. Families who had gathered for Christmas were caught without warning.

What Was Given

We were spared. A single day separated safety from catastrophe. Not because of insight. Not because of planning. Grace. Nothing more. Nothing less.

Walking Through the Aftermath

In the days that followed, I walked through what remained. Twisted debris. Broken foundations. Silence where life had once been. Survivors searched—not just for belongings, but for loved ones. The ocean, once calm, had revealed its power in a moment. I stood beside people who had lost everything. And in those moments, everything became clear.

What Truly Matters

Life is brief. Loss is real. And only Christ brings lasting healing. No achievement compares to standing beside someone in their deepest grief and offering presence, love, and hope. The tsunami stripped everything down to what matters most. Control is an illusion. Plans are temporary. Security is fragile. But faith—real faith—anchors the soul even when the ground itself has shifted.

The Question Without an Answer

I do not claim to understand why some were spared and others were not. That belongs to God alone. But I do know this: being spared carries responsibility. It calls for gratitude. It compels service. It creates urgency.

A Christmas That Changed Everything

That Christmas was never celebrated on that beach. Instead, it became something else—a marker. A reminder that life is not guaranteed. That obedience matters. That Jesus Christ remains the only unshakable foundation when everything else is shaken.

One Day

I delayed by one day. Just one. And in that single day, everything changed. The following week, after completing my tennis commitments in Sri Lanka, I returned to Hong Kong to be with my family. Then I traveled on to the Australian Open. Outwardly, life appeared to return to normal. But something in me had changed

permanently. Because once you have seen how quickly everything can be taken—you no longer live for self in the same way.

Chapter 23: Serving Christ — Hospitality from Others Around the World

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord.” — Colossians 3:23

Theme: God can use the things we love—like sports and other hobbies and interests—to reach people and build friendships. When we serve God, we are often blessed through the kindness and hospitality of others around the world.

Tennis has been part of my life from the very beginning. Because of that, one of the greatest privileges I have known has been sharing the message of Jesus Christ with professional players and others connected to the sport. Through tennis, I was able to travel the world. And along the way, I encountered something far more meaningful than any destination—people.

Hospitality That Stayed With Me

In city after city, country after country, I was welcomed in ways I will never forget. People opened their homes—to me and to my family. They gave us places to sleep. Food to eat. Transportation when we needed it. But more than that, they gave us something far greater—friendship and fellowship. Those moments were lasting.

A Life Always Moving

Traveling constantly was not easy. Every week brought a new location. A new country. A new environment. One week I might be in Hong Kong. The next, India or Sri Lanka. Soon after, France, Germany, Holland, or England.

Everything changed—food, culture, language, routine. Living that way required more than physical endurance. It demanded mental strength. Flexibility. The ability to adjust—quickly and continually.

Different Places, Same Mission

Even the simplest things—like where I slept—were never consistent. One night, a hard church floor in New York City. Another, a soft bed in Germany. Different places. Different conditions. But always the same purpose. And always something to be thankful for.

Moments of Difficulty

There were challenges along the way. Illness, at times, was unavoidable. I experienced severe food poisoning more than once—in France, in India—far from home, confined to a bed, with no familiar surroundings. Those were difficult moments. But they were part of the journey.

Moments That Remain

And yet, what stays with me most are not the difficulties. They are the moments of joy. A barbecue in Melbourne with lifelong friends. A shared meal in Paris after a championship final. Conversations with players—on the grounds, outside the stadiums, away from the spotlight. Simple moments. But meaningful ones.

What Truly Lasts

Looking back, I realize something clearly. What I remember most is not the travel. Not the challenges. Not even the tournaments. It is the people. The friendships. The hospitality. The prayers. The shared faith in Jesus Christ.

Those are the things that remain. Even now—decades later—they still bring joy to my heart.

A Grateful Heart

To everyone who welcomed me—who opened their homes, shared meals, offered kindness, and spent time along the journey—thank you. Your generosity has been a lasting blessing. Not only to me—but to my family as well. And those memories will never fade.

Chapter 24: From Global Courts to Home Ground — When the Season Changes

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” — Hebrews 13:8

Theme: Seasons change, but Christ remains the anchor.

In 2012, a transition began. Not suddenly. Not dramatically. But clearly. After eighteen years on the professional tennis tour—traveling the world, walking alongside champions, and serving in quiet, unseen moments—I sensed that the season was shifting. It had been full. It had been faithful. And I had given myself to it. But ministry is not only about staying where doors are open. It is also about recognizing when God is calling you somewhere new.

Three Flights, One Message

One of the clearest spiritual promptings came through a series of events that unfolded over one year. On three separate flights connected to my tennis ministry—traveling to and from the Australian Open, arriving in London for the Wimbledon Championships, and returning home from the US Open—I faced unforgettable danger. The first was on my way to the Australian Open. Our flight was scheduled to go directly into a typhoon. While in Taiwan, I felt strongly that I was not supposed to board the connecting flight to Hong Kong, and I refused. The plane left without me. Thankfully it did land, the last plane do so in the city for several days.

The second incident happened while arriving in London for Wimbledon. As our plane descended toward the airport, it was struck by lightning. The sound was like a bomb exploding, and the entire aircraft shook violently. The third came to the US Open, flying from Hong Kong into South Korea on the connecting leg to

New York. Both engines suddenly stopped, and for what felt like an eternity there was only silence as the plane dropped. Finally, the pilot was able to restart the engines. After that third incident, I understood it as my wake-up call. It was time to lay down the tennis ministry and the travel it required—not entirely out of fear, but out of conviction. And so, I did.

A Different Kind of Calling

This time, the call was not outward. It was inward. My family needed me. Daily. Present. Engaged. After decades of movement, the greater calling became staying.

A Changing City

At the same time, Hong Kong was changing. The environment I had known was shifting. Pressure was increasing. Political tension. Social uncertainty. A growing sense that stability could no longer be assumed. Families felt it. Communities felt it. And I felt it too. Faith does not remove a person from the realities of the world. It strengthens them within it.

Understanding Through Experience

I had seen these patterns before. In Europe. In mainland communist China. I understood how systems tighten. How pressure builds. How people adapt. I knew how to discern. How to respond carefully. How to remain anchored in Jesus Christ instead of fear. But understanding does not remove responsibility.

Choosing What Matters Most

My children did not need a moving father. They needed presence. They needed someone who was there—not off on trips, but every day. That realization carried weight. And it brought clarity.

Stepping away from the professional tour was not easy. It was not a retreat. It was obedience. The same God who had sent me across

nations was now calling me to remain in one place. To invest all my time differently. To serve in a noticeable time to my family.

Transition often carries loss. Even when it is right. Even when it is necessary. But I came to understand something deeper. Seasons change. But calling does not disappear. It is refined.

The time we share as a family has become one of the greatest blessings in my life. Our two children are now grown and pursuing their careers, yet we all remain close—and that connection is a steady joy in my daily life, second only to my relationship with Jesus Christ.

Unchanging Foundation

Through every shift, one Truth remained steady. Jesus did not change. When the platform changed—Jesus remained. When relationships shifted—Jesus remained. When public ministry became quieter—Jesus remained.

A New Chapter

The professional tour had been one chapter. Mainland communist China had been another. Hong Kong, another still. Now, a new chapter was beginning. Less visible. But no less meaningful. Because purpose is not defined by visibility. It is defined by obedience.

What Does Not Change

The tennis courts may change. The tournaments may change. The crowds may change. The season may change. But Jesus Christ does not. And in that—there is certainty.

Chapter 25: Hong Kong — Freedom, Faith, and Becoming the Pastor of Civic Public Square

*“Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed.”
— Isaiah 1:17*

Theme: Jesus Christ calling me to stand publicly for justice and freedom in a changing city.

The world outreach vision Jesus gave me changed me permanently. My life was no longer my own design, nor confined to one place. It belonged entirely to Jesus Christ. Old ambitions faded. A new calling emerged—to serve wherever Jesus led.

A Life Repositioned

I could not have imagined where that path would lead. Jesus brought me to Hong Kong—raising my children there, living between two systems. Tennis—the game I had carried so naturally—became one of Jesus’ instruments, opening doors I could never have planned.

A City Between Worlds

Hong Kong stood in sharp contrast to the communist mainland. Freedom of speech. Open debate. A willingness to question authority. It became home. But after the 1997 communist takeover, subtle pressures began to grow. Slowly. Almost imperceptibly at first. Then unmistakably. I watched freedom erode in ways I had seen before—patterns I had been prepared to recognize.

A Personal Turning

During this time, my marriage came to a peaceful close. We had grown apart in vision and culturally, yet we chose to honor what was good, protect one another's dignity, and focus on our children. Today, we remain friends. We co-parent with grace and gratitude, rejoicing in our daughter and son as they flourish in their own paths.

Rooted in Jesus' teaching, I chose singleness—not as loss, but as calling. There were moments of loneliness. But in those moments, prayer became strength. Trust became anchor. The words of the apostle Paul became real to me—that the unmarried can be fully devoted to the work of the Lord. And that freedom allowed me to serve without division. To be present where I was needed most.

A Ministry Expands

My calling began to extend beyond tennis. I found myself walking alongside students, professionals, families, and activists—people facing uncertainty in a rapidly changing environment. In those moments, presence mattered more than position. Jesus' presence brought clarity where there was confusion. Peace where there was tension. Courage where there was fear.



The Civic Square, Hong Kong

Called to Stay

Civic Public Square became the center of that calling. I went first simply to observe—to understand. But I did not leave. I stayed. Not as a protester. As a pastor. People began asking for prayer. For guidance. For someone to stand with them. So I did. Day after day. Night after night. Month after month. Year after year. With water. With Scripture. With presence.

A Costly Stand

In 2013, after deep prayer, I undertook a 106-hour hunger strike. Not as a political act. But as a spiritual one. A stand for peace, justice, and solidarity with those who felt unheard. During those hours, I listened. I prayed. I stood beside people carrying fear, uncertainty, and hope all at once. One evening, a young protester shared his family's fears as the sun set. We prayed together in silence. And through it all, Jesus sustained me.

A Name I Never Chose

Over time, people began calling me “The Pastor of Civic Square.” It was never a title I sought. But it reflected something simple—consistency. Presence. Faithfulness. In moments of tension—tear gas in the air, uncertainty rising—I remained. One night, as riot police advanced, a young student took my hand and said quietly, “Thank you for staying.” That moment said everything. Because presence matters. And Jesus Christ calls us to it.

When Pressure Increases

As the years passed, pressure intensified. Surveillance increased. Restrictions tightened. In 2019, I was arrested and not just detained, while filming a Christian media segment and holding my American flag outside Hong Kong Beijing's Liaison Office. The reason being that I had a false Hong Kong identification card. I knew that was not true as I had mine for many years. The conditions were harsh. I was denied United States Consulate contact. I was released later

that day with no charges filed and an apology. The message was clear. The environment had changed.

Strength for the Moment

Hong Kong became the convergence of everything that had come before. Tennis had taught discipline. The military had taught awareness. Mainland communist China had taught discernment. And Jesus held it all together. I was not standing for myself. I was standing because Jesus Christ called me to. To serve. To be present. To stand with those under pressure. Jesus gave the courage. Jesus gave the peace. Jesus gave the clarity. And Jesus still does.

The Mission Continues

That chapter eventually closed. But the mission did not. Because what Jesus Christ begins does not end with a place or a season. It continues—wherever Jesus leads next. And Jesus is still leading.



Hong Kong church to the streets

Chapter 26: The Tent in the Square

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those being crushed.” — Proverbs 31:8

Theme Standing peacefully for justice can shine light in dark places. When we act with wisdom, courage, and the love of Jesus, even a small witness can inspire many people.

In 2011, I made a decision that many considered unusual. I moved into a small tent on a public square in Hong Kong. It was simple—just a tent, a few signs, and a clear purpose.

A Stand for Justice

My aim was straightforward: to draw attention to communism, the justice system and the role it would play in the future of communist controlled Hong Kong. I believed the courts were a critical battleground—not in a political sense alone, but in what they would ultimately represent: freedom, accountability, and truth. I wanted to bring light to what I believed was beginning to shift beneath the surface.

Counting the Cost

Before I began, I considered the risks carefully. Nothing about this was casual. I understood the environment. I understood the potential consequences. And I knew that wisdom would be required at every step. There were factors that gave me a measure of protection—though none offered certainty.

I was a foreigner with legal residency in Hong Kong, which often caused authorities to proceed cautiously. I was a Christian pastor,

acting peacefully and openly. And I had taken the time to understand the law.

Repeatedly, I confirmed with police that I could remain in a public space—24 hours a day, seven days a week—within legal boundaries. But beyond all of that, my trust rested in something deeper. I believed that if I acted in a way that reflected Jesus Christ—with integrity, with humility, with peace—Jesus would guide me.

The First Night

I set up my first tent outside the Wan Chai court complex. It was a place where justice was not just discussed—it was decided. Later, I established a second presence outside the Hong Kong communist government headquarters. A small table. A few chairs. Lights for the night. A place for conversation. A place to pray.



**Bob Kraft first protest tent, Wan Chai government building.
2011**

Staying When It Was Quiet

At the beginning, I was alone. There were no crowds. No movement. Just a man in a tent. But I stayed. Days became weeks. Weeks became months. Months became years.

When People Begin to Come

Slowly, people began to stop. Some were curious. Some were cautious. Some were searching. They came with questions. They came with concerns. They came with hope. Conversations began. About faith. About freedom. About justice. And then something shifted. The media noticed. Local coverage became international attention. What had begun quietly was no longer unseen.



Bob Kraft teaching faith to Hong Kong students in front of the communist government headquarters

A Place of Gathering

The tent became more than a place to stay. It became a place to gather. People came to pray. To talk. To seek understanding. We held worship services. We prayed together—openly. We asked for wisdom. For courage. For peace. It became a visible reminder that faith does not retreat under pressure.

From One to Many

What began as one act of obedience did not remain one. Others came. Tents, growing to thousands, appeared. Voices grew. Crowds, first hundreds, then thousands, then millions formed. At its height, two to three million would take to the streets—a movement far beyond anything I could have created or controlled.

A Light in a Changing City

The tent placed a spotlight on something deeper than a location. It pointed to a question: What will the future hold? And what are people willing to stand for?



Bob Kraft first Hong Kong tents, communist headquarters

What One Step Can Become

I understand now something clearly. It was never about the tent. It was about speaking truth and obedience. A single step—taken in faith—can become something far greater than we imagine. Because when a person is willing to stand—others begin to see. Others begin to ask. And sometimes...others begin to stand as well.

Chapter 27. Hong Kong 2011: Standing Alone for Jesus When the Crowd Went Home — Uncensored Television

“Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.” — 1 Corinthians 15:58

Theme: Christ called me to stand alone for His truth when all others left, turning a single faithful presence into a beacon of hope and light against the darkness of censorship and communism.

In October 2013, tens of thousands gathered outside the communist government headquarters in Hong Kong. For one week—day and night—Civic Square was filled with people, tents, and a shared concern over media censorship surrounding HKTV. The atmosphere was intense, but peaceful. Voices were raised. Convictions were clear. And for a brief moment, the city stood still and watched.

Already There

I was already there. Since 2011, I had been maintaining a continuous presence nearby—praying, speaking with those who passed by, and quietly standing for faith, truth, and freedom. When the protests grew, I moved into Civic Square. Not as an organizer. Not as a political figure. But as a pastor. Present. Available.

After the Noise Faded

For a week, the square was alive. Then, as quickly as it had filled, it emptied. Tents came down. Crowds dispersed. Voices faded. People returned to their routines. And when it was over—I stayed.

Why I Remained

I did not stay for recognition. I stayed because I believed presence mattered. Many around me were searching—for clarity, for hope, for something steady in an uncertain time. And I believed that what they were ultimately searching for was found in Jesus Christ. So I remained.

Removed, But Not Moved

In August 2015, authorities cleared the area. Tents, tables, signs—everything was removed. I was forced out along with others who had joined me. But leaving the square did not mean leaving the calling. I relocated to the nearby sidewalk. Same place. Same purpose.



Bob Kraft tents

The Return

Something unexpected happened. People began to come back. Not all at once. But steadily. They saw that the presence remained. That it was peaceful. That it was consistent. And over time, the numbers grew again. Some stayed for hours. Some for days. Some for weeks. Tents returned. Conversations resumed.

A Different Kind of Gathering

What formed was not just a protest space. It became a place of reflection. Of prayer. Of quiet strength. We held public gatherings. Shared Scripture. Prayed openly. Encouraged one another. In the middle of uncertainty, there was something steady.

Years, Not Days

What began in 2011 did not end quickly. It continued—through changing seasons, through rising tension, through increasing pressure—until 2019. There were moments of clearing. Moments of restriction. But the deeper work continued.

What Cannot Be Taken

One truth stands above all others. Circumstances can change. Spaces can be cleared. Voices can be limited. But what is rooted deeply cannot be taken away. Not by pressure. Not by restriction. Not by time.

An Unfinished Story

Hong Kong's story is still unfolding. So is the story of its people. And so is the work of God within it. Because while environments shift and seasons change—Truth remains. Hope remains. And the quiet decision to stay, to stand, to serve—still matters.

Chapter 28: Hong Kong Umbrella Movement When the Gas Fell — The Unbreakable Hope

“At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” — Philippians 2:10–11

Theme: September 28, 2014 — The Day the Streets Changed

On September 28, 2014, everything changed. What began as peaceful gatherings in Civic Square escalated suddenly—tear gas filled the air, batons swung, crowds surged. Within hours, the streets of Hong Kong were no longer just occupied—they were awakened. People poured in. Thousands. Then hundreds of thousands. Eventually, millions out of a population of six million eight hundred thousand.

This was no longer only about political reform. It had become something deeper. A visible declaration—that the people of Hong Kong were not ready to surrender their future without question.

In the Middle of It

I was there. I felt the tear gas burn my eyes and throat. I saw the injuries—faces bloodied, bodies struck, people falling from bloody blows. I stood alongside them—praying, encouraging, helping where I could. There were moments when the line between safety and harm was thin. Those beside me were hit, knocked down, sometimes carried away. And yet, I remained. Protected in ways I cannot fully explain—but deeply believe Jesus was standing alongside of me and in our mist hearing the cries.

A Line That Had Been Crossed

The response revealed something unmistakable. The environment had shifted. What had once been assumed—openness, space for expression—was no longer guaranteed. The tension that had been building quietly was now visible to the world.



Hong Kong streets with tear gas

Seventy-Nine Days

That day marked the beginning of what became known as the Umbrella Movement. For seventy-nine days, the streets remained occupied. But the movement did not end there. It continued—in different forms, across years, through changing circumstances. And through it all, I stayed present. Not as a leader of crowds—but as a steady presence among them. Offering prayer. Offering encouragement. Standing with those who felt the weight of what was unfolding.

The Cost of Standing

There was a cost. For many, it was immediate. For others, it would come later. Prisons. Restrictions. Uncertainty about the future. The price of speaking, standing, or even gathering was no longer theoretical.

Looking Forward from the Present

Now, years later, the effects are still visible. Lives have been altered. Families silenced. Paths redirected. And yet, the deeper reality remains. This is not only a story about power or protest. It is a story about something more enduring—Truth, conviction, and the human desire for dignity with freedom.



Hong Kong Umbrella Movement begins, September 28, 2014

What Cannot Be Taken

Systems can change. Pressures can increase. Freedom can narrow. But there is something that remains beyond all of it. A freedom that does not depend on circumstance. A foundation that is not shaken by external control. That is where hope continues.

An Unfinished Story

Hong Kong's outcome is not fully written. And neither is the work that continues within it. Because even in moments of uncertainty, there remains a quiet persistence—to stand, to pray, to serve, and to hold on to what is true. And that...continues.

Chapter 29: The Hong Kong Airport

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” — 2 Timothy 1:7

Theme: The city that stopped the world

I attended the protest at Hong Kong International Airport during one of the defining moments of the movement—an event that brought the struggle for freedom into full view of the world.

To understand those days from August 12 to August 13, 2019, you have to understand what came before it.

First, the people of Hong Kong flooded the streets and were met with tear gas on September 28, 2014. Then came the marches over the years—millions moving together with purpose and courage. And finally, the airport on August 2019—where the message of the movement would meet the world face to face. These three events attracted the world’s media and attention.

Each moment was seen across the globe. But the airport was different. Personal. Impossible to ignore.

From my perspective, these protests were not led by a single figure. They moved through people—ideas shared quietly, then carried rapidly through WhatsApp, Facebook, and other platforms until thousands, even millions, showed up. It reminded me that when something is placed on the hearts of people, it does not require a central voice—only conviction.

The airport protest followed that same pattern.

I heard about it a few days beforehand through rumor and social media. As the day approached, reports confirmed it—crowds

forming, thousands walking the narrow singular road leading to the airport, bringing traffic to a halt.

I had already planned the next morning to take someone to the airport. Instead, I felt led to go the night before to talk to and support those in attendance, both passengers and protestors.

That decision did not feel planned—it felt directed.

When I arrived, the atmosphere was already shifting.

Inside the terminal, the ordinary sounds of travel—rolling suitcases, boarding calls, distant conversations—mixed with the growing presence of the crowd. Protesters filled the arrival areas. Some sat quietly. Others spoke in low, focused tones. There was no single leader, yet there was unity.

I walked among them, listening and speaking. As I had done before, I carried an American flag. I did not carry it as a statement of politics, but as a symbol—of freedom, of hope, and of something larger than any one nation.



Hong Kong airport protest

I raised the flag first among the people in the center of the crowd in the arrivals area, then later from the walkway leading to the departure counters. Looking down, I saw a sea of faces—determined, watchful, unafraid and it was noticeable that later the walkway to departures was being filled up with protesters intent on stopping flights. At first, everything was calm.

But as more people arrived, the atmosphere changed.

The sound deepened. Conversations became chants. Movement slowed as bodies filled every open space. There was tension, but also clarity of purpose.

In that moment, I found myself praying quietly. I prayed for protection over those who had chosen to stand. I prayed that the message being carried would be heard without loss of life. I prayed for those whose travel was being impacted and even canceled. Most importantly I prayed for safety.

Their intention was clear—to bring the attention of the world to their call for freedom. And the world responded. Cameras appeared. Reporters arrived. Live broadcasts began. What started as a gathering became a global moment.

Then the shift came.

The protest became a shutdown. Flights were halted. Entrances blocked. The eighth busiest international airport in the world stood still—not because of force, but because people chose to stand together.

Then the police moved in. You could feel it before you saw it. The air tightened. The energy shifted. The possibility of confrontation settled over the crowd like a weight. In that moment, I had to make a decision. I did not feel fear—but I did feel clarity.

There are times to stand, and there are times to step away. Wisdom is knowing the difference. I chose to leave. But I did not leave in spirit

At home, I followed everything through live feeds. I watched as the protest continued, as the crowd held its ground. And then I saw something that stayed with me—American flags beginning to appear throughout the crowd. More than one. Then many. They were lifted above heads, steady and visible.



Hong Kong airport

To me, it was not about a country. It was about what that symbol represented to them in that moment—freedom, dignity, and the hope that someone, somewhere, was watching and would understand.

For three days, the airport remained in the hands of the protesters. And then, just as it began, it ended peacefully. They left in waves—boarding buses and trains, returning to their homes. No final clash. No immediate mass arrests at the site. Just a quiet departure.

But the impact remained. The world had seen.

And I reflected on what I had witnessed—not just as an observer, but as someone who stood among them. Freedom is not an abstract idea. It is something people will stand for, walk for, and risk for. And faith, I realized, is not separate from that. Faith is what gives people the courage to stand in the first place.

In the middle of that crowded airport, surrounded by uncertainty, I did not feel chaos—I felt conviction. And I believe that where people stand for what is right, even in the face of risk, God is present.

Even in the noise. Even in the tension. Even in a place as unlikely as an airport brought to a standstill. For a moment, the world stopped and noticed. And in that moment, the voices of the people were heard.

Chapter 30: Democracy University

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” — Joshua 1:9

Theme: Stand visibly and faithfully in the place God calls you, so others can see truth lived out without fear.

After the clearing of the sidewalks and streets by the communist Hong Kong security forces on December 11, 2014, known as the first clearing, there was silence.

The kind of silence that settles in after force has done its work—when crowds are gone, barricades are stripped away, and the energy of thousands is reduced to an empty space that still remembers what it held. The communist Hong Kong security forces had done exactly what they were ordered to do. The streets were cleared.

And I stayed. At first, I was alone.

Then a few returned. Quietly. Carefully. Watching, the way people do when they’re not sure what comes next. One became five. Five became twenty. Over time, several hundred gathered again in that same place that had just been emptied.

We all knew what had happened there before. Millions had taken to the streets. Not in theory, not in discussion—but physically, visibly, together. What remained now was not the movement in its full size, but something just as important: a witness to it.

Those several hundred carried that weight. But they were hesitant. They stayed close together, contained within a small area, as if

stepping beyond it might invite the same force that had already swept through. I understood. That fear was real, and earned.

But I didn't share fear.

Not because I didn't understand the risk—but because I knew why I was there. I believed I had been called to that exact place, for that exact moment. And because of that, I saw something beyond the fear: this was a moment that required growth. Not loud defiance. Visible confidence.

I told those alongside me they needed to expand. They resisted at first. Not out of weakness, but out of experience. They had seen what happens when lines are crossed. But I also knew something else—that if the people of Hong Kong were ever going to move forward, both they and those who controlled them needed to see something different. Not retreat. Not chaos. But calm, disciplined presence.

I had built a level of respect with the communist Hong Kong police. They knew me, and they told me plainly that they respected me. So, I went directly to them and asked a simple question: Could the group expand? The answer came back just as simply: Yes, but do not block the sidewalks. That mattered. Because now there was clarity. Not guesswork. Not assumption. A defined boundary.

I knew the exact dimensions required for public passage, and I brought that back to the group. This wasn't about pushing limits—it was about operating within them, confidently and precisely. I marked the line with tape. A clear boundary. Visible. Respected.

And that night, something changed. The tents expanded. Not in one direction, but in several. What had been contained began to breathe outward. It wasn't a surge—it was a deliberate step. Measured. Controlled. But unmistakable. The next step was structure. With the help of those around me, we raised two large canopy tents. They weren't just shelter—they were a signal. This wasn't temporary. This was intentional. Then came the name.

“Democracy University.”

It wasn't formal. It wasn't accredited. But it was real. Because what followed gave it substance.

Among those several hundred were skilled people—carpenters who went to work immediately. They built tables, chairs, and shelves with their own hands. No outside system. No institution behind it. Just people building something they believed was needed.

Books began to arrive. At first, a few. Then more. Then hundreds. Eventually, thousands. Books on democracy. Freedom. Faith. Donated by the public. Placed on those shelves. Available to anyone, at any time. The library never closed.



Hong Kong Democracy University

Day or night, anyone could walk in, sit down, and read. There were no guards, no restrictions, no gatekeepers. It belonged to the people because it was built by the people.

Every night, I taught.

Faith and democracy. What surprised me most wasn't the willingness to listen—it was what I was told in return. Many of those attending said they knew little to nothing about democracy. Not in any structured or practical sense. It hadn't been taught to them, even under British rule and not anytime following under communist China rule.



Teaching on Democracy, Bible study, prayer

So I taught what I knew. The American system and the Bible. The principles behind it. Not as perfection, but as a working model—something to understand, question, and learn from. Night after night, it continued. The numbers weren't massive. Not compared to what had been. But that wasn't the point anymore.

What mattered was visibility.

We were positioned along a main road—one that carried hundreds of thousands of cars in and out of the Central district. Day and night, people passed by. And they saw us. They saw the tents. The structure. The order. The books. The people who had not disappeared. And they saw the sign. A large yellow sign. “Democracy University.”



That sign did more than any speech I could give. Because it didn't argue. It didn't shout. It simply existed—clear, visible, and unafraid. Encouraging. Educating. Not through words alone, but through presence.

In the end, that was the lesson. Sometimes the most powerful statement isn't what you say. It's what you are willing to stand in plain sight and build.

In that place—after the clearing, in the quiet, under the watch of authority and uncertainty—I understood something clearly: Jesus was not absent from that ground. Jesus was present in the standing, in the building, in the refusal to disappear. Where others saw risk, I saw calling. Where there was fear, Jesus asked for faith.

“Democracy University” was more than a name—it was a witness. Not just to freedom, but to Jesus Christ who gives it. And in that moment, on those streets, I wasn't just standing for an idea. Jesus was standing alongside.

Chapter 31: Singing “Hallelujah” to the Lord from Hong Kong

“The Lord is my strength and my song; He has given me victory.” — Exodus 15:2

Theme: When people praise God, fear loses its power. Even a simple song can give courage, unite people, and remind the world that true power belongs to God.

From my tent now on the sidewalk alongside the Civic public square, word came down: the area would be cleared. The tents removed. Everyone gone.

When the Crowd Disappears

People began to leave. One by one, they packed their belongings and went home. The sidewalk and streets emptied. Then the police arrived. Controlled. Systematic. Enforcing the order. And when it was over—only one person remained. Me.



Bob Kraft's location and pink chair stayed

The next morning, the Chief Executive of a now communist Hong Kong, C. Y. Leung, was driven past the square. I imagine he expected to see compliance. Silence. An empty space where voices had once been. But instead—he saw me. Sitting in my familiar chair. A small detail, but one that had become known—my pink chair, with my name, “Bob,” written on it. He looked directly at me. His expression changed—as his eyes grew wide. Then the car moved on. I do not know what he thought. But I knew what I thought. I was not afraid. I knew Jesus. And I sitting for truth, knew and felt Jesus alongside of me protecting, encouraging and loving.

The Return

Within twelve hours, something unexpected happened. People came back. At first, just a few. Then more. Soon, hundreds gathered again—not inside the square as that had previously been fenced off, but just outside it, along the sidewalk. And they stayed. For months.

The Wall

That night, I did something simple. Drawing from my memories of standing at the Berlin Wall years earlier, I wrote a message by hand and placed it on the fence surrounding the communist government complex. It read: The Wall of Shame.

The Wall of Shame

Within hours, others began doing the same. Messages appeared—written, taped, attached—one after another. What had been a barrier became a voice. The display grew. And the world noticed. International media reported on it. Images spread across continents. Even broadcasts reached places where freedom was limited—a reminder that people everywhere understand the language of truth.



The Wall of Shame

When Pressure Increases

The government responded again. This time, more firmly. Another clearing. More force. More control. And in that moment, I knew something. It was time to step away from that location. Not from the mission—but from the place. Because the mission had already moved beyond it.

From One Place to Many

What had once been centered in a single square was now everywhere. Across the city. In different streets. Different gatherings. Unpredictable. Uncontainable. The movement no longer depended on one location—or one person.

One Word

On the night of that second clearing, I gathered a small group—about thirty people. They were committed. Focused. Willing to stand. I prayed about what to share with them. It needed to be simple. Clear. Something anyone could sing. I chose one word that any language would understand: **Hallelujah**. It means, Praise the Lord.

A Sound That Spread

We began to sing. Quietly at first. Then stronger. Soon, other groups picked it up being taught by those the group of thirty.

Across nearby streets, the same word began to rise. Many who sang were not Christians. But they understood something deeper—that real power does not come from systems or authority. It comes from something greater, God.

Hallelujah

Sometimes, it is not complexity that carries truth. It is simplicity. One word. Spoken. Sung. Shared. And remembered. Because in every circumstance—no matter how uncertain—there remains something unshakable. And, all it takes to express it is this: Hallelujah.

A City Responds

Within days, the song spread. Thousands began singing it—in streets, in public spaces, in gatherings across the city. The sound carried. And the world heard it. Through media. Through video. Through shared moments that could not be contained.



Hong Kong people singing Hallelujah

What Remains

Even now, those videos remain on the Internet. Voices lifted together. A single word—echoing through a city under pressure. A reminder that no matter how strong systems appear, they do not hold the final authority.

Chapter 32: Pleading Guilty or Innocent — A Matter of Life or Death

*“Woe to those who call evil good and good evil...” —
Isaiah 5:20*

Theme: Under pressure—holding to truth and conscience when the cost is high and outcomes are uncertain.

It was never just a legal decision. For those who stand in the courtrooms of communist Hong Kong, facing charges tied to protest and presence, the question—guilty or innocent—carried far more weight than the words themselves. It was a matter of consequence. Of future. Of freedom.

Often, court decisions did not come quickly.

Many were arrested and then waited—not weeks or months, but years—before ever standing in a courtroom. Time itself became part of the pressure. Lives put on hold. Futures suspended. Families waiting in uncertainty.

The charges, on paper, often seemed minor. “Illegal gathering.” “Unlawful assembly.” Defined as two or more people together.

Before the shift in control, these were offenses that might result in a small fine. Under older legal norms, they were manageable, limited in consequence. But that reality changed. Law, whether under British common law traditions or under communist systems, similarly can be applied selectively—used not only to maintain order of the governed, but to maintain control over the governed.

With the change on July 1, 1997, now the communist Hong Kong’s courts shifted in authority. Judges swear to uphold the Basic Law under the communist China National People’s Congress. While the system retains the form of an England

common law, ultimate authority rests with Beijing, shaping how the law is applied. For those in the courtroom, that shift was real.

Then came the National Security Law.

And everything changed in a moment on June 30, 2020. What had once been minor charge could now carry the weight of decades in prison. Even life. In some cases, outcomes then felt closer to a life sentence than a legal penalty. The uncertainty alone was enough to reshape every decision made in those courtrooms.

This was the environment in which people were and now asked to choose: Guilty. Or innocent.

I spent time there with the charged—in the courtrooms, in the prisons, in the quiet spaces just outside, in conversations that carried more weight than most people could see. I spoke with them, acknowledged them, prayed with and for them. And sometimes, when asked, I offered perspective.

But I never told anyone to plead guilty. Not once. I also understood why some chose it anyway.

For many, pleading guilty was not an admission of truth—it was a path to survival.

A way to shorten the process. A way to see freedom again, even if only in part. A way to return, sooner, to family and friends who were waiting.

I never disrespected that choice of speaking the words of “guilty” or “innocent”. Not for a moment. Because it was made under pressure most people will never fully understand.

And then there were those who pleaded innocent. Some of them were my friends. I hold them in the highest esteem. Not because their path was easier—it wasn’t. It often meant longer detention, greater uncertainty, financial ruin and the possibility of harsher consequences. But they chose to stand on what they believed to be

true, regardless of outcome. That kind of decision carries its own weight. Its own cost. And its own form of courage.

In those courtrooms, justice did not always appear blind. Outcomes were not always predictable by evidence alone. The system of guilt and innocence itself had changed, and everyone standing within it knew that.

But something else was present too.

Something that could not be legislated or controlled. Respect. Among the people of Hong Kong, it remained. For those who endured. For those who chose differently and the difficult under pressure. For those who stood, in whatever way they could, within a system that had become something else entirely.

I saw it in quiet nods. In shared glances. In the way people spoke to one another without needing many words. The law could shift. The consequences could grow heavier. But the recognition of courage—in all its forms—remained. And in the end, that mattered more than any charge ever written on paper. Those who under a communist system plead “innocent” have my highest and utmost respect.

In those courtrooms, where every word carried weight and every decision could shape a life, I was reminded that Jesus Christ once stood accused—silent before power, yet unwavering in truth. He understood injustice, pressure, and the cost of standing firm. And in those moments, as pleas were spoken and futures hung in the balance, I know that Jesus is present there too—not distant, but beside each person, seeing fully, judging rightly, and offering a strength the system could neither give nor take away.

Chapter 33: Sharing Jesus Simply — The Power of Simple Words

“Let your ‘Yes’ be yes, and your ‘No,’ no. Anything more comes from evil.” — Matthew 5:37

Theme: Simple truth can be very powerful. Sharing faith clearly and honestly, people can understand the message without confusion.

Over the years, I have learned something important about myself. I stay focused on what I do best. I do not engage in long, complicated debates. I prefer simplicity. Directness. Because when it comes to sharing the words of Jesus Christ, I have found that the clearest message is often the most powerful.

I wrote all in both English and traditional Chinese so that it could be clearly understood by those in Hong Kong, Taiwan and beyond.

Staying Grounded

But I have learned to remain grounded in what I know. Not everything needs to be argued. Not everything needs to be expanded. Sometimes, Truth is best expressed simply—clearly, directly, without complication.

A Message That Can Be Seen

One day, standing near the entrance to the communist government headquarters in Hong Kong, I felt prompted to write something. Not carefully planned. Not rehearsed. Just simple and direct. I wrote the words: **The Wall of Shame** and I placed it on the fence. People noticed immediately. The message required no explanation. It spoke for itself.



The Wall of Shame

Clarity Over Complexity

On another occasion, I wrote: **communist china — Get Out** Alongside it, I drew a simple symbol of a dog's paw. Again, the meaning was clear. People understood it without discussion. No interpretation required.



Hong Kong Supreme Court

The Core Message

But the message I returned to always is even simpler: **communism is evil. An evil empire. 共產主義是邪惡的。是一個邪惡的帝國。**

It is not written to provoke argument. It is written to express truth and conviction.

Some people wanted to debate the statement. To analyze it. To challenge it. To expand it into something more complex. But I did not feel the need to do that. Because for me, the issue came down to something foundational. A system that denies the existence of God stands in direct opposition to a life built on faith. That is where my conviction rests. Others may see it differently. They may disagree. And they are free to do so.

Staying Grounded

But I have learned to remain grounded in what I know. Not everything needs to be argued. Not everything needs to be expanded. Sometimes, Truth is best expressed simply—clearly, directly, without complication.

What Endures

I understand now something more deeply. It is not the length of a message that gives it power. It is its clarity. It's conviction. It's willingness to be spoken without hesitation. Because sometimes, the most effective message is the one that can be understood in a single glance.

Chapter 34: Freedom — The God-Given Will

“Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees.” — Isaiah 10:1

Theme: The Voice of the People and the Demand for Just Authority

Freedom of Choice

For me, the Hong Kong protests have always been about one thing: freedom of choice.

Freedom—not as an abstract idea, but as something real and lived. Hong Kong, in my view, was never meant to become a subservient vassal under a communist system imposed from outside its people. For me, the answer has always been clear. A future I believe in—then and now—is one in which it has and will be known as The Republic of Hong Kong. That is my choice.

Others have said that when mainland communist China resumed control of Hong Kong on July 1, 1997, it was rightful. That it was welcomed. That history had simply corrected itself after more than a century of British rule. But if you want the truth, you must ask all the people who lived through that moment. I am one of just many.

And from where I stood, very few desired communist rule.

The overwhelming spirit among the people was not one of celebration—but of uncertainty, resistance, and quiet defiance. What followed, in my view, was a distortion from the very beginning.

Negotiations were carried out in the years leading up to 1997—between the British government and representatives of mainland communist China. Yet the people of Hong Kong, those most affected, were never meaningfully consulted and were largely kept unaware of the substance of those discussions. The process was not transparent. The terms were not openly debated. And the final decision was presented as something already settled. A “done deal.”

The cost becomes clear

We were told it was lawful. We were told it was inevitable. We were told it was “inalienable.” We were told we had to accept it. But many did not agree. And so, they took to the streets. I was one of them.

There were promises made—most notably that Hong Kong would remain a free and distinct society for decades under a framework known as “one country, two systems.” I rejected that promise then. And I reject it now. Because it was never grounded in reality.

The moment truth cannot be ignored

Over the years, it has become increasingly clear that Hong Kong has been absorbed—politically, legally, and culturally—into the system of mainland communist China. Control has consolidated. Freedoms have narrowed. Voices have been silenced. What was once a vibrant society has been reshaped into something far more restricted. A communist city in mainland communist China.

To those who argue that a valid agreement existed between Britain and communist China, I ask a simple question: Where, in that agreement, was the voice and consent of the Hong Kong people? Can any transfer of sovereignty be called legitimate if the people themselves were never given the right to accept or reject it?

To those who point to the Basic Law as evidence of autonomy, I say this: A law is not an expression of freedom if the people it governs had no real role in creating it—and no power to change it.

Ultimate authority was never in the hands of Hong Kong's people. It rested—and still rests—far beyond their reach.

Without the consent of the governed.

The truth, as I see it, was not written in documents. It was written in the streets. In the millions who marched. In the voices that refused to be quiet. In the courage of those who stood—even when the consequences became severe, even deadly.

Many of those voices have since been silenced—some by fear, others by imprisonment, and yes, even by death. And yet, their message remains.



Taking to the Hong Kong streets

To all those—the governments, the judiciary, business leaders, the international community, and yes, even some of the protesters—who agreed to these two-sided terms without the consent of the governed: the Sino-British Joint Declaration; the Transfer of Sovereignty (1997); the “One Country, Two Systems” framework; the Basic Law; and the National Security Law (2020)—my greatest disrespect to you, and shame on you!

My conclusion is simple.

I will never agree to communism being imposed without consent. I will never accept a system that denies people the right to choose their own future.

But I will always stand for this: That every people, everywhere, has the right to determine their own path. To choose their own government. To live free from rule they did not consent to. That is the meaning of freedom. That is the principle worth standing for. That is freedom of choice.

Faith Reflection: Freedom and the God-Given Will

Freedom of choice is not only a political idea—it is a spiritual one.

From the beginning, God granted humanity the ability to choose. In the Garden of Eden, there was no coercion—only the presence of choice. Love requires freedom. Faith requires willingness. Without choice, neither can exist. Scripture affirms this truth:

“Choose this day whom you will serve...” — Joshua 24:15

God does not force allegiance.

God invites it. And in that invitation lies dignity. When I reflect on Hong Kong, I see more than a political struggle. I see a deeper question: Do people have the God-given right to choose how they are governed, how they live, and what they believe?

If every person is created in the image of God, then their will—their capacity to choose—is sacred. To deny that is to diminish something God established.

When agreements are made without the people, when authority is imposed without consent, when truth is reshaped for convenience—these are not merely political missteps. They are moral and spiritual failures.

The voices that rose in Hong Kong—the millions who walked, who stood, who resisted—reflect something deeply biblical: perseverance in the face of power.

*“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness...” —
Matthew 5:6*

What remains when nothing is easy

The longing for righteousness is never wasted. My prayer is not only for Hong Kong, but for all people: That they may live in truth. That they may walk in freedom. That they may never lose the courage to choose what is right, even when the cost is high.

Because freedom of choice is not just a political right. It is a reflection of the divine image within us.

Historical Notes for Context

Transfer of Sovereignty (1997)

On July 1, 1997, sovereignty over Hong Kong was transferred from the United Kingdom to the People’s Republic of China, following the Sino-British Joint Declaration (1984).

“One Country, Two Systems” Framework

This framework proposed that Hong Kong would retain its economic and administrative systems for 50 years after 1997, until 2047.

The Basic Law

Hong Kong’s pseudo-constitutional document took effect in 1997. Final interpretive authority resides with the National People’s Congress Standing Committee of China.

National Security Law (2020)

Enacted by Beijing, this law significantly expanded central authority and led to arrests, institutional changes, and restrictions on dissent.

Chapter 35: Pressure, and Exile — Leaving Hong Kong and Continuing the Mission

“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” — Matthew 5:10

Theme: Enduring consequences while trusting Christ.

By 2019, Hong Kong had changed. What had once been open and steady had become strained. Tension was no longer subtle. It was visible. Tear gas. Arrests. Confrontations in the streets. The risks were no longer theoretical. They were real.

Choosing to Remain

I continued to stand by the Civic Square as close as possible. Not to provoke. Not to escalate. But because I believed something simple—a reminder of the presence of Jesus matters. When people face uncertainty, when fear begins to take hold, knowing they are not alone gives strength. But standing publicly now carried a cost.

When Pressure Builds

The pressure increased steadily. Surveillance tightened. Conversations changed. Friends began to speak carefully. Some urged caution. Others urged me to leave. Hong Kong was not just where I lived. It was home. It was where decades of relationships had been built—through ministry, through friendship, through shared experiences. Leaving was not a simple decision.

Discernment in the Middle of Risk

Faith gives courage to stand. But it also gives wisdom to discern. There comes a point when staying is no longer the right step. Not because the mission has ended—but because it must continue differently.

The Decision

By 2022, that moment had come. The risks had become unavoidable—not only for me, but for those around me. So I left. With two suitcases. Everything else stayed behind.



Hong Kong tear gas streets

A Different Kind of Loss

Leaving carried a quiet weight. Separation. Adjustment. A sense of distance from a place that had shaped so much of my life. I thought about the people. The players. The students. The friends. The lives that were intertwined and intersected with mine over the years. Those connections do not disappear. They remain.

A New Place, the Same Calling

I relocated to Hawaii. A place of distance. A place of safety. A place to begin again. But the mission did not end. It continued. In different ways. Through speaking. Through writing. Through staying connected across distance. Technology now bridged what geography separated.

Not an Ending

This was not defeat. It was transition. Every season before had led to the next—from Illinois tennis courts, to international travel, to Hong Kong, to mainland communist China, and now here. Each step had prepared the next.

What Remains Constant

The location may change. The circumstances may shift. But the calling remains. Not because of my strength—but because Jesus Christ is faithful. Jesus sustained me there. Jesus sustains me now. And Jesus will continue to sustain whatever comes next.

Chapter 36: Hardship and God's Faithfulness

“We also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.” — Romans 5:3–4

Theme: Jesus Christ redeeming every trial and carrying me toward His purpose.

No life—no matter how blessed—is without hardship. Mine has been no exception. I have spoken often of the good—the calling, the nations, the people, the purpose. But to tell the story honestly, I must also speak of the difficulties. They are real. They have tested me. They have shaped me. And ultimately, they have strengthened me.

The Balance of Life

The good has far outweighed the bad. But the difficult seasons had their place. They refined me. They taught me what could not be learned any other way.

Personal Loss

There were seasons of personal pain. Divorce was one of them. It is more than a legal ending. It is the unraveling of a shared life. It brings strain. Difficult conversations. Uncertainty. And with children, it carries an even greater responsibility—to ensure they remain supported, stable, and deeply loved. I faced that season directly. Not with bitterness—but with resolve. To remain present. To remain responsible. To remain a father.

There were also moments of betrayal. Not many—but enough to leave an impression. Betrayal carries a particular weight because it

comes from those once trusted. It teaches caution. It sharpens discernment. But it also presents a choice. To become hardened—or to forgive. I chose not to let it harden me.



Relationships and Lessons

Before marriage, there were relationships that did not last. That is part of life. Not every path leads to permanence. But each experience carries a lesson—about commitment, about character, about what truly matters.

When I married, I understood the seriousness of that commitment. Faithfulness is built on decision. Daily. Through both ease and difficulty. Through moments of strength and moments that require endurance.

What Hardship Reveals

Difficulties are not interruptions to life. They are part of it. They test character. They reveal priorities. They expose what we truly rely on. And they remind us—we are not meant to stand on our own strength.

I never allowed hardship to define me. Or to divert me from my calling. Each challenge was faced. Each obstacle endured. Not by strength alone—but through faith in God. Through perseverance. Through the quiet certainty that God remained present—even in the hardest moments.

A Deeper Perspective

The betrayals did not make me distrustful. The divorce did not make me withdraw from responsibility. The disappointments did not take away hope. Instead, they deepened my understanding and kindness. Life is not measured by the absence of hardship. But by the presence of purpose within it.

When I look back, I do not see perfection. I see perseverance. I see grace. I see a life marked not only by victories—but by lessons learned through difficulty. And through it all, one truth remains clear: God has been faithful. The good has far outweighed the bad. And even the difficult seasons—in time—became part of the good.

Chapter 37: The Wounds You Cannot See

“Praise be to the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble.” — 2 Corinthians 1:3–4

Theme: Bringing the comfort of Jesus Christ to those wounded by trauma.

Not all wounds are visible. The deepest ones rarely are. They live in the mind—in memories, in sleepless nights, in persistent anxiety, in the quiet aftermath of overwhelming stress.

Seeing What Others Miss

I first recognized this during my military service. Constant readiness. Uncertainty. Pressure that never fully lifted. Some carried it silently. Later, in mainland communist China and Hong Kong, I saw it again—in activists, in families, in ordinary people living under strain. Different environments. The same unseen burden. Detention. Prison. Threats. Fear that lingered long after the moment had passed.

Learning to Listen

My understanding did not come only from books. It came from people. From listening. Many carried pain they could not easily describe. Outwardly, they appeared steady. Inwardly, they were struggling. I learned that the most powerful thing I could offer was not answers. It was presence. To sit. To listen. To allow someone to be seen without judgment.

Where Comfort Begins

In times of rising tension in Hong Kong, young people would approach me quietly. They asked for prayer. For reassurance. One young man, shaken after detention, spoke of recurring nightmares. We met regularly. We talked. We prayed. We read Scripture together. There was no quick solution but over time, something changed. Peace returned—not because of anything I had done, but because Jesus met him in the place where fear had taken hold.



Hong Kong terror. Yuen Long

Shared Understanding

American military veterans often connected quickly with me. We shared a common language—not just of experience, but of what remains afterward. The weight of service. The echo of past danger. The difficulty of returning to ordinary life. I encouraged simple things. Structure. Routine. Small, steady steps that bring stability. But more than that, I reminded them of something deeper: identity is not found in the past or in the struggle—but in Jesus.

Stability and Something More

Discipline has its place. Routine can steady the mind. Physical movement—tennis, exercise—can quiet the body. But these alone

are not enough. They support. They do not restore. True healing comes from something deeper. From Jesus Christ. Jesus brings comfort that cannot be manufactured. Hope that cannot be created by effort alone. Peace that does not depend on circumstances.

A Ministry of Presence

Listening became a form of ministry. Many did not need solutions. They needed space. To speak. To be heard. In those moments, I did not offer quick answers. Only presence. Compassion. And a quiet reminder—that nothing they carried was unseen. See by Jesus Christ who stands alongside of them and hears as they call out to Jesus.

Continuing the Work

Now, in Hawaii, the work continues. Veterans adjusting to life after service. Young people facing uncertainty. Individuals carrying burdens that are not immediately visible. Tennis still provides connection. Conversation builds trust. And through it all, I point them toward the same source—Jesus.

Where Healing Comes From

Healing is rarely immediate. It is often quiet. Gradual. Unnoticed by most. But when it comes—when stability returns, when hope begins again, when purpose is rediscovered—its impact is lasting. I do not heal anyone. I walk alongside. And I trust Jesus to do what only Jesus can do. Because in the end, Jesus is the one who restores what cannot be seen—and carries what we cannot carry alone.

Chapter 38: Pastoral Care in Hawaii — Serving Through Christ

“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” — Galatians 6:2

Theme: Continuing to serve the vulnerable in the name and strength of Jesus Christ.

After decades in Europe, communist China, and Hong Kong, relocating to Hawaii brought something I had not experienced in a long time—stillness. Not an end. Not a pause. But a different pace. Because the mission did not stop. It simply changed form. And through it all, one thing remained unchanged—Jesus Christ at the center.

A Different Landscape, the Same Need

Hawaii is known for its beauty. But beneath that beauty are real challenges. Homelessness. Young people searching for identity. Veterans carrying unseen burdens. Families navigating uncertainty. I arrived with a willingness to be present. And I have learned that service often begins there.

After the Fire Took Everything

I served on the Salvation Army Disaster Relief Team. Most recently, I was called to Maui, Hawaii after the wildfire that destroyed an entire town. Nothing in my training fully prepared me for what I saw.

People had lost everything. Families gone. Homes reduced to ash. Some had run through the fire—burned, yet alive. Men, women, children, the elderly—standing in shock, holding on to nothing but their lives.

I helped them find shelter, food, and whatever hope I could offer. Sometimes it was something small—a toy for a child. Sometimes it was simply being there. And, I asked one question: “Would you like me to pray with you?” Every one of the more than 500 people I spoke with said yes. **The Tennis Court as a Bridge**

Tennis has remained the bridge. It opens doors. Builds trust. Creates connection. I work with children—some from stable homes, others from broken ones—many of whom have never held a racket before. I teach the fundamentals—grip, movement, focus. But beyond that, I point them toward something deeper. Discipline. Purpose. Hope.



Junior Christian tennis camp, Hawaii

I often tell them: “The court reflects your mind. Stay present. One point at a time. And let Jesus Christ steady your heart. Believe.” When frustration rises, we pause. When focus fades, we reset. Not just in the game—but in life. And slowly, something begins to change. Confidence grows. Posture shifts. Belief takes root. Many arrive uncertain. They leave standing taller. Believing they matter.

Shared Ground

Hawaii's large veteran community has created natural connections. My own military experience gives us a shared understanding. There is no need to explain certain things. They are already understood. I offer structure. Conversation. Encouragement. But most importantly, I point them toward something lasting. A foundation that does not shift.



Soldiers and sailors, Hawaii

Those the World Overlooks

I have also spent time with those experiencing homelessness. Many feel invisible. Unseen. Unheard. I listen. I treat them with dignity. I remind them that they are known—and loved. Sometimes, practical help follows. Other times, it is simply the presence of another person that makes the difference. And often, that is where healing begins.

A Steady Work

The work here is quieter. Less visible. But no less meaningful. Because the mission has never been about visibility. It has always been about faithfulness. Showing up. Listening. Serving. Pointing others toward something greater than circumstance. The location has changed. The pace has changed. But the center has not. Jesus remains the reason I show up. The strength I rely on. The hope I share.



Oahu Church for the houseless

Still Moving Forward

Mission does not retire. It continues. In different places. In different ways. Through different seasons. Because Jesus is who calls, does not change. And as long as Jesus leads—I will follow.

Chapter 39: Twenty-Seven Nations — Where God Led Me

“The Lord had said to Abram, ‘Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.’” — Genesis 12:1

Theme: Christ guiding me across nations to serve and be served.

I would not be complete if I did not reflect on the nations themselves—the places and people who shaped my life as much as any single event or calling.

Over the course of my journey, I have traveled to twenty-six nations. Some of those travels came during military service, where duty carried me across borders. Most came later, as a missionary and tennis chaplain, where faith became my compass. Each nation was more than a destination—it was an assignment.

Time does not allow every story to be told. But this I know: it has been one of the greatest privileges of my life to see the world—not as a tourist, but as a servant. To walk in unfamiliar places, hear unfamiliar languages, and still discover something deeply familiar—the shared humanity that binds us all.

I walked the cities and tennis courts of the United States, where my journey began. In Mexico, God first revealed that tennis could become ministry. In Canada and Germany, competition sharpened both my game and my character. Across the Netherlands, Belgium, England, France, Austria, Ireland, Italy, and Switzerland, I encountered cultures rich in history and people whose lives intersected with mine in lasting ways.

In Australia, far from home, I found warmth that made distance irrelevant. In Greenland, the stark beauty of creation spoke quietly of God's majesty. Across Asia—Japan, Guam, South Korea, communist China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, The Philippines, and Macao—I saw how tennis and faith could bridge cultures often divided by politics and history.

My path also led me to Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, India, Singapore, and Vietnam—each unique, each resilient, each unforgettable. I visited the Vatican, a place representing centuries of global influence.

Each nation left its mark on me.

Some places were difficult. Some required caution, wisdom, and endurance. There were moments of uncertainty—moments when the path forward was not clear. Yet even in those places, I encountered kindness. Generosity. Humanity that rose above circumstance.

It is easy to remember nations for their landmarks or scenery. But I remember them for their people.

The players who welcomed me as a friend. The families who opened their homes such as the McKenzie's in Melbourne, Australia. The believers who worshiped quietly but faithfully. The Pastors who supported me in many ways. The coaches who carried vision for the next generation. Those who became lifelong friends. Their kindness is what remains.

Travel taught me that while cultures differ, the human heart does not.

People everywhere long for meaning, for hope, for connection. They long to know they matter. They long to be seen. Through tennis, ministry, and simple presence, I was given the privilege to walk alongside people across the world. What I gave was small compared to what I received.

When I began this journey, I could not have imagined where it would lead—from the courts of my youth to the mission fields of Asia, from military service to professional tennis tours, from empty courts in communist China to full stadiums around the world. Every step carried purpose. The nations gave me perspective. They gave me humility. They gave me friendships that crossed borders and endured time.

I set out to serve. But in serving, I was the one who was blessed. And while time may blur certain details, I will never forget the people. Their faces, their kindness, and their shared humanity remain with me still—a living testimony to a life lived not in one place, but across many nations, under the guidance of one faithful God.

Chapter 40: Legacy — A Life of Faith, Service and Standing for Freedom

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” — 2 Timothy 4:7

Theme: Looking back on a life shaped by discipline, service, and the quiet guidance of Jesus Christ.

From my lanai in Kapolei, Hawaii, I look out over the Pacific and reflect on a path that began on cracked public courts in Bloomington, Illinois. The journey carried me to military posts in Cold War Europe, into the complexities of communist China, tennis stadiums around the world, through the protest squares of Hong Kong, and now to this quiet island. It was never a straight line. Many turns were unclear at the time.

In the end, it is not accomplishments that endure, but faith, family, and the relationships we nurture along the way.

What Remains

What stands out now is not the places or the titles—but the One who directed every step. Jesus Christ has been the constant. Jesus gave meaning to the discipline I learned on the tennis court, the vigilance I carried in uniform, the courage required in restricted environments, and the compassion needed to stand beside those who were afraid or hurting.

Tennis taught me perseverance and focus. Military service taught me that freedom is costly—and must be guarded. Years in communist China and Hong Kong revealed the resilience of ordinary people under pressure, and the strength of quiet faith in hidden places.

And now, in Hawaii, the work continues—mentoring young players, walking alongside military veterans, serving those without homes, serving victims of disasters, offering encouragement and prayer when asked.



Bob Kraft, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, 2025

God has blessed us with two grown children, now pursuing careers in accounting and finance. Though they are adults, we remain close—spending time together and truly enjoying one another as a family. This is one of the greatest joys in my life—a blessing I never take for granted, second only to my relationship with Jesus Christ.

A Life Pointing Beyond Itself

None of these seasons were about building a personal legacy. They were about showing up. Serving. And pointing—however imperfectly—to Jesus Christ.

The Unchanging Center

Through every place, every challenge, every season—one truth remains: Jesus Christ is the center. Jesus always has been. Jesus always will be.

Chapter 41: Epilogue: Breaking Every Chain

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.” — Galatians 5:1

Theme: The enduring freedom found only in Christ.

Freedom is often invisible—until it is threatened. I saw it at the Berlin Wall. I felt it in the quiet pressures of life in communist China. I witnessed it in the courage of Hong Kong’s streets.

External freedom can be restricted, delayed, or taken away. But internal freedom—the freedom Jesus Christ gives—cannot.

What Cannot Be Taken

No system, no surveillance, no exile can command a heart that belongs to Jesus. Fear loses its hold. Doubt loses its voice. Despair loses its claim. Because identity is no longer anchored in circumstance—but in Jesus.

Finishing the Race

Leaving Hong Kong did not end the calling. Relocating to Hawaii did not pause it. The work continues—quietly, faithfully, one person at a time. On the tennis court. In conversation. In moments that may never be seen by others

What Has Always Been True

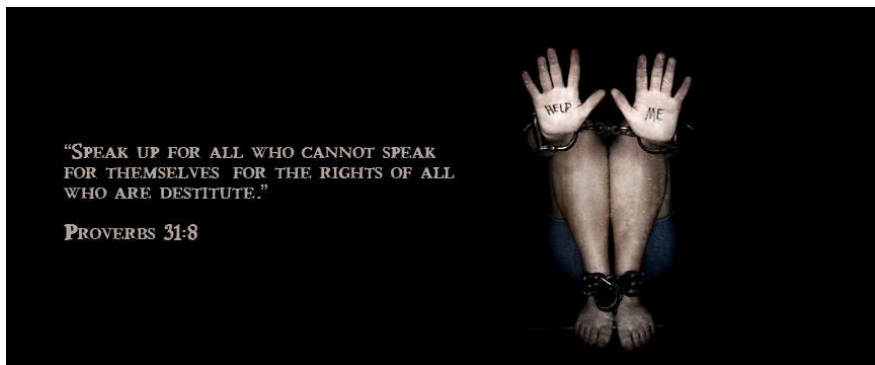
The mission has never changed. To serve. To listen. To walk alongside. And to point—always—to Jesus Christ.

The Final Truth

Jesus is enough. Jesus breaks the chains that truly matter. Jesus remains the center—unchanged through every season.

Lasting Freedom

In Jesus Christ, there is a freedom no one can take. And in the end—that is all that truly matters.



About the Author

Robert Kraft is a pastor, former U.S. Army intelligence and administration soldier, tennis coach, and founder of Tennis Ministry International. He served in twenty-seven countries and lived for decades in communist China and Hong Kong. He now resides in Hawaii and continues serving youth, veterans, and those in need.



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